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Social Artistz: Cultivating Youth Investment in the Arkansas Delta's Future through Arts-Based Collaborations and Spaces

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Social Artistz: Cultivating Youth Investment in the Arkansas Delta's Future through Arts-Based Collaborations and Spaces

by

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Dedication

To my middle school art teacher and very first mentor, Mrs. Pauline Muller-Orton. May you rest in peace, thank you for inspiring this former student to make art or die.

Acknowledgements

Former students are solely responsible for the inspiration of this study and my ongoing commitment to finish the work. During my journey I found myself supported by many mentors, friends, and family, even strangers. Thank you Dr. Christopher Adejumo for challenging me, ever so patiently, to write *with* communities, not just *for* communities. Dr. Paul Bolin, you showed me how to ask questions only from the soul. Working under your leadership cemented the importance of my curiosity as an educator *and especially* as an artist. To my parents and siblings, I so appreciate the sacrifices and time you gave me over all these years. To Ariel Kay, for all the sparkles. To Misti Staley, for inviting me to paint a mural. To Anika Fassia, for the wisdom of studying near Texan swimming holes. To Jinji Willingham, for giving me a graduate student deal on therapy, making my journey into self-care possible. To Gerald Stoneham, for making sure I ate my greens. To Manjula Varghese, for collaborating on the Delta film project with me (we will finish that!). To The Contemporary Austin, for restoring my faith in arts-based institutions as change-agents. And finally, to all the incredible muscle of Thrive: thank you for hosting this case-study and funding my creative endeavors in the region through an internship and our pilot year of Thrive Arts. Your dedication to re-imagining society through art and design continues to prove what is possible for my former students. All my love and light to the family, friends, and kindred souls in the Delta: you listened and shared stories on all those visits for dinner, walks on the levee, sips on porches, and more. Your stories remain the most important in my life today.

Abstract

Social Artistz: Cultivating Youth Investment in the Arkansas Delta's Future through Arts-Based Collaborations and Spaces

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Located in a rural community in Eastern Arkansas, "Social Artistz: Cultivating Youth Investment in the Arkansas Delta's Future through Arts-Based Collaborations and Spaces" is a case-study investigating the purposes and applications of community-based art education. The research interviews members of the Helena-West Helena, Arkansas community of artists, art educators, teenagers, museum professionals, and other youth leaders. The findings from the qualitative research methods contribute to a design of a program focused on youth empowerment, with place and history as the central drivers of questioning. What educational environment in the arts would truly inspire creativity of the town's youth while directly linking them to long-term investment of their own community? Subsequently, "Social Artistz" is a program hypothesis custom-fitted to the needs and wants of youth seeking a deeper connection to their own community and a reimagined future for the voices of the South through art education.

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Chapter One: Introduction

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The landscapes and the towns of the Mississippi Delta flex with the Mississippi River's floodplain from Memphis all the way to New Orleans. I moved to a town in "the Delta" called Helena-West Helena (HWH), Arkansas, with the intention of addressing educational inequality in rural areas of the South through participation in Teach For America's teaching corps program. Placed as an art educator in a K-12 public school district during the Fall of 2010, I explored art history, various mediums, and design theory. I also invited artists into the classroom, an attempt at "real world" exposure. At the end of my last year at that particular public school, I stood with my students across from a mural we designed with a local artist on the levee wall running along the glistening Mississippi River. Against silhouetted representations of each of my students doing community service, we painted "Youth Can Make a Big Impact." The project held my student engagement at an all time high; however, I felt that the message of the mural is one my students did not believe, especially coming from me, a white woman from Northern Utah. I was trying, but I could feel a massive gap between my lessons and their lived experiences.

Fundamentally, my students' lived experiences within the larger context of systemic oppression questioned the best practices of my teacher training programs and the ongoing professional development of my school. What learning environment for my

students would actually empower them as Black people in the community and how could I be a part of it? Was I even part of the equation? I wondered if a public educator working as a part of a Teach For America (TFA) placement could provide a quality arts education. As I fostered relationships with the arts community inside and outside of my school, young and old, I resolved to find a program, a project, maybe even a social movement that could truly empower my students. "Social Artistz: Cultivating Youth Investment in the Future through Arts-Based Collaboration and Spaces" is a case-study that begins a community-based education program aimed at direct empowerment. While I entered the Delta as a TFA arts educator, I returned as a researcher ultimately asking for something I could collaborate with others on, and, definitely not something from only my perspective. The mindsets, assets, and lived experiences of my students and their communities would be the start of the empowerment, perhaps even the very backbone.

I started my research by interviewing fifteen participants. The study gathered data from a sampling of students, museum professionals, community leaders, artists, and art educators. Many participants crossed between multiple groups, representing artists and museum professionals, for example. Some of the participants were contacts from my teaching days. Other participants represented areas of work that extended outside of my teaching. I then transcribed those interviews and analyzed patterns alongside other research notes. In a process outlined in later chapters, six themes were identified and applied to a program design framework entitled "Social Artistz." Following the presentation of my core research question, I present my personal and professional motivations and also the limitations and benefits of the study. Consecutive chapters

explore the literature behind the history of the region, a review of the methodologies, an analysis of the data, and a final chapter including key findings. “Social Artistz,” the design framework developed through the key findings, is found in the final chapter.

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

The following question guided this study:

What are the primary mindsets and key assets of local community leaders, art teachers, artists, museum directors, and teenage youth in Helena-West Helena Arkansas surrounding the purposes and applications of art education in the community? Based on those findings, how might the key mindsets and assets be used in the design of a collaborative art program that inspires teenage youth to engage and or strengthen commitment to the community of Helena-West Helena through participation and inspiration from the proposed program?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The case-study investigates the assets and mindsets of the participants in order to add to the vast dialogue of social justice influences in art education. Addressing the opportunities available for youth interested in the arts must first recognize the role of violence, racism, and oppression normalized in today’s learning spaces for entire sections of our student population. For readers unfamiliar with the region’s demographics, environment, and history, the Delta is home to a prominently Black population and the years of history and impact of a slave-trade economy centralized into the heart of the U.S.

through the Mississippi River. My classroom walls usually failed at recognizing this history, a problem I knew I would never remedy. Anti-Black violence and ongoing oppression presented my former students with a reality my classroom techniques would never navigate. As an individual carrying immense white privilege, my position of power as a white-skinned, fully employed, female teacher represented the majority of society benefitting "…from the status quo, dismissing public issues as private troubles…" Goldbard (2006) continues to explain how the dismissal has been "a winning strategy with intractable consequences for the rest of us" (p. 41). Even if I went to more schooling or sought more training on how to fashion more solidarity in my classroom, I would be unprepared to truly empower my students without community-based efforts. The central research question uses community-based methods and their broad range of art objects and practices to "act as a catalyst for dialogue about individual and group identity" (Congdon et al, 2001, p. 3). Those methods are used to address the dialogue of identity of a young artist in the Delta.

Numbers and census data illustrate an economic story behind the current landscape for Delta students. According to local census data, nearly 35.4% of residents in HWH live below the poverty line with a decrease in population from 11,500 people in 1980 to 8,700 people in 2000 (United States, 2013). For a young person growing up in the region seeking to work and make a life, a population drop of nearly one third (some estimates identify upwards of 50% of population loss) must make the decision to stay or go dependent on opportunities available to them. Data sets predict that within a 45-minute radius around HWH (see Figure 1), only 3.4% residents will attend an art gallery

in the next six months (nearly half the national average). A wealth of art is published in books and 7.1% of residents bought 4-7 books in the last year. The rate is below the national average by more than 3 points. Driving between 45 minutes and 90 minutes away from HWH, the percentage of people buying a small collection of books rises to 8.9% (United States, 2013). From the lack of money circulating to bring art books to the libraries to the lack of arts funding in schools, the opportunities for arts-based curiosity into culture and history are few. Allowing youth to re-imagine history and create a new future becomes much more difficult without economic support or opportunity.

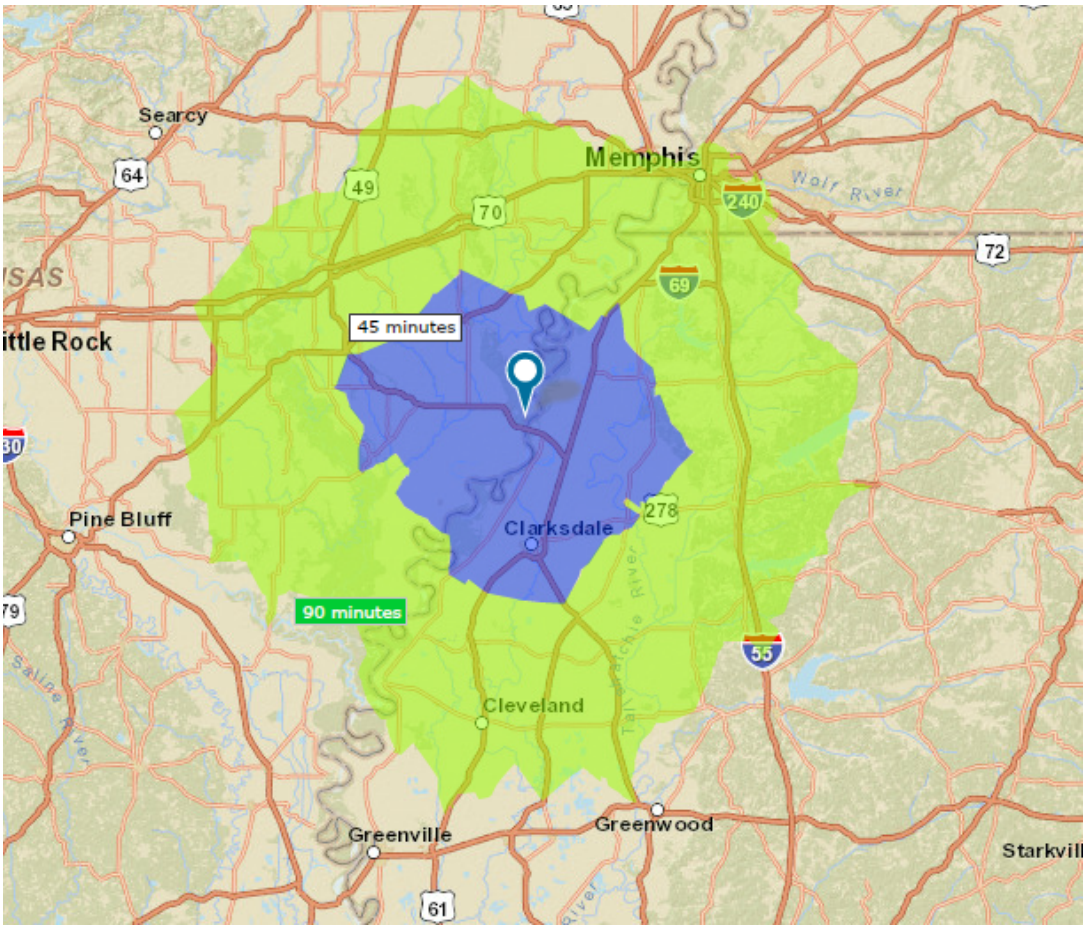

Figure 1: Map of Helena-West Helena

MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Personal and Professional Motivations

My motivations for asking these research questions about community-based art education in the Delta started after my time in the region as an educator with Teach For America. I attended teacher training at Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi and then moved to Helena-West Helena Arkansas to build a brand new arts program. I believed then and still do now that saying and doing nothing are the same as supporting oppression. My motivation as an educator was to support areas of research and work where inequality was being addressed through a variety of social and economic systems and public education. Within my first few months as an arts educator, I discovered my lack of awareness of the power dynamics my privilege brought into the room. My larger ideas of dismantling institutional oppression were cut short with even larger ideas of my own approach as an educator. I had a desire to learn and become more informed, yet I lacked the experience navigating a classroom as a culturally sensitive educator. I worked alone in planning the curriculum and even if I did connect with several of my students, we spoke little about their lives as Black Americans in my classroom lessons. As I developed relationships with my students, I began to adjust my approach. I needed to do more than just plan content for my students, I needed to inspire "community" and truly listen to their ideas of how class should go. How could I turn my classroom over to them? The stories began to build a larger thought: there was nothing I could tell them about being their own artist. The dialogue my students and I shared about their communities

prompted a path of inquiry that stayed with me in the evenings and the weekends and eventually into my thesis research in Austin, Texas. My classrooms, then and now, needed more room for community to breath, both from within my students and outside of our classroom walls.

I may have entered the Mississippi Delta with lofty ideas of social justice, but I returned again and again to listen as questions about greater reciprocity within the community appeared, time and again. I returned to research with Thrive, a local design nonprofit that plays a role in this study. While I was researching the probability of an artist-in-residence community program, I taught some of my former students in summer community programs. Having returned for short visits and internships over the years, I started my Master's degree research with questions about mindsets and assets of art education and the people designing those community programs, including myself. Whether I am aware of my own white privilege, my presence in the Delta and in this study support larger patterns of power and oppression. As a white female educator, artist, and community leader, I want this case-study to present a program design capable of building solidarity for all. I am still listening, as this case-study is surely not the only stop on my lifelong journey as an educator.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Primary Mindsets

Common patterns of attitudes, beliefs, paradigms, and perceptions about a subject that underpin past and current actions and experiences.

Key Assets

The essential talents and strengths as seen through past or current produced work or production strategies.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to one community over one specific length of time. Findings will only apply to one rural environment, failing to contribute to larger discussions of art-based collaborations in a larger national context. Perhaps standing as the largest limitation to the study, the community of art educators and community leaders working in the region may completely reject the research. The shortened research window and study scope provides little room for investigating the complex social justice strategies unique to the Rural South (and with the kind of depth needed). An outsider to the region also conducts the study. Someone from the community may likely bring a deeper analysis of participant voices of those from the Delta. Given the 67% Black majority presence, the study needs a perspective of someone Black in order to truly legitimize the findings assets and mindsets of the arts community (United States, 2014). Socio-economic factors

and identity are powerful forces in the many voices needed to legitimatize a true scope of art education in the region.

Significance to the Field of Art Education

Through art programming, educators and artists gain the ability to empower their students in re-imaging society and creating new possibilities for livelihood. Investing in innovation of art education programming in the Rural South places this study in a larger community of art educators and artists interested in changing the conversations about rural poverty and community empowerment. The study attempts to re-contextualize the theory and dialogue of academia into the daily lives of those most willing to place emphasis on building art education programs for youth. The contribution of the rural perspective only enriches the expansive community of art educators across the nation building community-based programs. Hopefully, the potential impact of this study also reaches into the lives of my former students.

Conclusion

The research study begins to look at how the current mindsets and assets of community members, artists, art teachers, and high-school students might influence the quality of additional art programming in the region. Motivations and implications finished out Chapter One, and the remainder of the chapters illustrate the study's full scope. Ultimately, the assets and mindsets from several themes deliver insight into a possible program guide used to insert student voice into future arts spaces and

collaborations. Such radical spaces of community-based youth empowerment belong to the Arkansas Delta.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two provides the required foundational background regarding several aspects of the study's themes and findings. While Chapter Three explains the case study's methodology in greater detail, this chapter contextualizes the study's real world themes and outcomes. Beginning with a general look into the vast field of art education, the chapter then discusses more specific aspects of community art education and theories of learning and radical spaces within art communities. I spend considerable time outlining a community arts program in Helena and laying out various frameworks generally used in community arts planning. Central goals in the entire literature review seek to build context for the reader, but also build understanding around the study's key findings.

Once again, the central research question is as follows:

What are the primary mindsets and key assets of local community leaders, art teachers, artists, museum directors, and teenage youth in Helena-West Helena Arkansas surrounding the purposes and applications of art education in the community? Based on those findings, how might the key mindsets and assets be used in the design of a collaborative art program that inspires teenage youth to engage and or strengthen commitment to the community of Helena-West Helena through participation and inspiration from the proposed program?

INTRODUCTION TO ART EDUCATION

Art Education as a vast field of study encompasses many perspectives and movements. From curriculum design to community programming, the motivations of artists and educators have created a field of study exhibiting ongoing ideas and complex themes for today's art and education circles. A comprehensive overview of the history of the development of these themes and ideas is impossible to accomplish in this single chapter. Modern histories often ignore how dominant power structures eradicate histories of "others" and contribute to an incomplete record of events and influences. However, this introduction seeks to frame the field in several grounding discussion points. As far as art in public schools, "art" as a subject in schools has existed in United States public schools since the 1870s (Kern, 1985). But this is just a reference to a year, a marker in a larger conversation and series of movements between artists and educators about how, when, and where the arts belong in education or educational spaces.

Understanding the layers of such events gives the context needed before discussing specific connections to this case-study. The conversation about the purposes and general history of art education can be viewed through three major frameworks or groupings: child-centered, subject centered, or society-centered curriculum framing. Many programs and curriculum projects for schools and community education groups use multiple frameworks, often combining all three themes in their methods. An example would be an art-curriculum that is both child-centered and society-centered. Gude (2007) states:

> The essential contribution that arts education can make to our students and to our communities is to teach skills and concepts while creating opportunities to investigate and represent one's own experiences—generating personal and shared meaning. Quality arts curriculum is thus rooted in belief in the transformative power of art and critical inquiry. (p. 6)

Experienced art educators, or any educator that uses arts-based themes and methods bring students to a place where identity and self-reflection are major factors in their student's artwork. And by expressing unique perspectives and inserting their lived realities into their artwork, students find engagement in larger and often shared meanings. Art education is capable of hosting student experiences rooted in any combination of child-centered, subject-centered, or society-centered engagements.

Taking those frameworks and the power of shared meanings into the 21st Century, students today live in a very different world than found in previous decades. Teachers today need to be aware of such changes, and invite an inquiry of change into learning environments for youth (especially around community topics). Those already working to improve the quality of life are turning to arts-based methods that promote community pride through measurable, authentic, and universally positive efforts. Many art educators have advocated for increasing diverse experiences for students into art curriculum (Bolin & Blandy, 2003; Eglinton, 2008; McFee 1995; Steward & Walker, 2005). In the words of June McFee (1995), "We have more diverse cultures and more change and reaction to change than ever before—in our schools, in our society, and in the characteristics of our national identity" (p. 171). The increasing interconnectedness of our world needs art educators adapting to the many changing realities of the next generation.

Both the frameworks and practices behind major movements of art education developed approaches and adaptations to the modern changes within art education in various ways. Visual literacy is a major theme, an entry point for discussion. Eglinton (2008) looks into how students' lived experiences impact the environments art educators have created in their responses to it. She defined "place and space" as the "material and symbolic aspects and/or social narratives found in certain sites" (p. 51). These sites for students contain multiple images – images from the Internet, clothing, fine art, even popular media influences like TV and movies. Bringing images from pop culture and other visual culture from students' sites into the curriculum develops "an approach to pedagogy which focuses on critique, for example, supporting young people in recognizing that visual material culture is laden with influential sociocultural meanings" (Eglinton, 2008, p. 53). In today's world, art education is a place where "young people are contextual agents who, through local cultural practices, actively produce, navigate and use visual material culture to shape both themselves and the world around them" (Eglington, 2008, p. 62). Becoming aware of visual images around the world, students can gain tools to de-tangle the daily delivery of advertisements and news that so often mis-represent individual lives and normalize oppressive actions.

Carrying the potential of visual cultural analysis into the classroom, art educators can also draw on what Bolin and Blandy (2003) refer to as material culture: "All human-mediated sights, sounds, smells, tastes, objects, forms, and expressions are material culture" (p. 250). Material culture is defined as anything that has been created through the process of "purposeful human intervention, based on cultural activity" (p. 250). Pushing

the visual literacy focus into material culture also gives students a chance to evaluate images and objects and the way these entities were made. Art is culturally situated and participants engaging in arts-based learning and art-making have a chance to question the structures of today's life. Thinking critically about our world in the art classroom asks teachers to incorporate the cultural context of art objects, not just the visual images themselves.

One of the first art educators to advocate for bringing global culture into art education spaces was June McFee, head of the Department of Art Education at the University of Oregon from 1965-1983. According to McFee (1995), the emphasis of art education into the cultural studies (later including visual culture and material culture) positions educators to begin conversations around the advantages of difference. She advocated for culturally aware art education that emphasized "studying multiple cultural realties made accessible by visually communicated values, beliefs, and feelings in art" (McFee, 1995, p. 187). With each person making art based from their culturally learned symbolic systems, "art is one of the major communication systems in most cultures. Each member of a culture learns to "read" or understand the culture through the art that expresses values, patterns of organization, social structures, and belief systems" (p. 178). Educational spaces across the world do spend a considerable amount of time teaching students about cultural practice and production; however, art education is set apart as a place uniquely capable of including collective and individual exploration for youth.

Elevating art education spaces into a level of engagement where students can analyze and communicate differences in culture was not the only revolutionary idea

introduced by McFee. She defined art-making as "those human activities which purposefully and qualitatively interpret, invent, extend, and imbue meaning through organized visual form or enhance the form and meaning of objects. These activities are conceptualized as processes and products of what we call art" (p. 179). Her framework for inserting cultural relativity into curriculum opened up a new emphasis for students' lived experiences. At the same time that there was an emphasis placed on free expression in the classroom, there was an increase in cultural exploration. McFee (1995) explained:

> Without the sociocultural understanding of art in their own culture, students miss an important avenue for understanding changes that take place in art— among the artists, the art institutions, the art disciplines, and the ushers, and as art reflects change or leads to change in society itself. (p. 185)

Studying the multiple realties, students come to an understanding of many different perspectives. Art education became a space, she advocated, where students could negotiate their position in the world but also dive deep into the worlds of other participants. Powered by inquiry and curiosity, students capture a foundation of constant self-empowerment by inserting their own lived experiences into their art.

An advocate for creating learning spaces where student-centered curriculum frames quality Community Based Art Education (CBAE), Adejumo (2010) researched a community-based program in Ohio and found that the participants enter deeper cognitive levels of learning in a decentralized classroom. Adejumo (2002) suggests: "The teacher becomes a partner who initiates learning and provides support as needed, but does not inhibit intuitive knowledge and innovative thinking in the process of these duties"

(Adejumo, 2002, p. 8). Letting the students guide their learning, such learning happens when all partners join together and trust intuitive and collaborative spaces.

While there are many frameworks and movements within the field of art education, this study narrowed its focus to center on the part of the field oriented toward community spaces with students' lived experiences at the center. The world is ever changing, and a generation of youth deeply capable of creating and innovating for a better world is rising up in today's educational spaces. Many sites in art education have moved into becoming full community spaces, as seen within several aspects of CBAE.

COMMUNITY-BASED ART EDUCATION

Movements in art education use a wide variety of curricular frameworks as needed. Within CBAE, special attention is paid to a kind of cultural development work that "responds to current social conditions: the work is grounded in social critique and social imagination. The precise nature of this response always shifts…" (Goldbard, 2006, p. 1). Essentially, unleashing our social "imagination" - to help us envision the world differently -- makes community-based arts a uniquely important type of social change strategy (Knight et al., 2006, p. xxiv). Contributors to the field of CBAE combat narrow-minded viewpoints, particularly those found around the spaces of arts learning.

While many of the movements and trends in CBAE use child-centered, subject-centered, or society-centered themes, the overall program designs do not always follow a specific structure or time line. Community art programming often happens in homes, or through public art on streets, and even through design work (Ulbricht, 2005). The

organizing aspects of the programming often happen through grassroots efforts or within larger structures like museums. Chung and Ortiz (2011) advocate for CBAE, stating, "Partnerships with local community organizations are essential if art education is to become part of a greater societal change, increase social recognition, and promote its unique creative role in public schooling" (p. 47). When discussing the history and impacts of community organizations, Ulbricht (2005) states:

> If community-based art education is defined as something that takes place outside of K-12 schools, it is not a new form of art education. Informal teaching has been and is the dominant method by which individuals learn about art. If we think of art education in communities, each culture and historical period has had its own methods of teaching individuals about art. (p. 7)

The impact of CBAE has always been felt within learning communities of artists. Some would suggest that art began in a community context, when multiple community members gave meaning to an individual's work. The larger practices of incorporating arts education into community spaces often includes different populations including older adults, people with physical and mental disabilities, and individuals who are incarcerated (Ulbricht, 2005). CBAE's ability to empower a diverse set of backgrounds and individuals makes it a powerful highlight within the field of art education.

The structure of CBAE programming efforts take on many different funding designs (non-profit vs. for-profit) in order to bring communities together. Overall, CBAE is most successful when programming has a purpose in connecting to participants' lives and meets the needs of the community (Adejumo, 2010). Congdon, Blandy, and Bolin (2001) explain that people participate in community arts in both a formal and informal settings. Congdon et al. (2001) state:

> Viewed from this perspective, art education incorporates a broad range of art objects and practices. This includes the traditional and popular arts. These diverse art objects and practices function, in part, as catalysts for dialogue about individual and group identity, local and national concerns, and ultimately the pursuit of democracy. (p. 3)

Where are the common art spaces and collaborations that ground "expression of things important to the community," and how can we invest youth in a process that includes solidarity for all participants, no matter their race, class, or sexual orientation (Borwick, 2012, p. 17)? While CBAE touches on the power of community arts for creating an environment for social change, there are many theories of learning directly tied to social justice work that transform community gatherings to intentional spaces for youth in a deeply radical way (Congdon et al., 2001). Quality programs are built by educators and community leaders willing to bring youth along in the steps necessary to record forgotten histories, among other purposes.

Advocates of CBAE know that community spaces "have been, and continue to be… enclaves in which people assemble, work, and act together for a variety of political, cultural, economic and educational purposes. These purposes are ultimately directed towards debating and creating the common good" (Congdon et al., 2001, p. 3). CBAE models embrace the power of diversity in thought and ask participants to look at the interests and characteristics of all community members. Ulbricht (2005) addresses various sites engaged in community-based art education today: "Students can learn about people by investigating the material culture in their communities. Today, many artists and architects engage in a form of ethnography before designing and building projects that fit and engage community interests" (p. 11). When people of all ages assemble together to

build spaces of community and free-expression, youth experience great empowerment in the process.

CONSTRUCTIVISM AS A LEARNING THEORY

Many educators choose methods inside classrooms and learning environments that celebrate community-based methods. Constructivism is one of these learning theories taught in many teacher preparation programs across the United States. Found in many art classrooms, constructivism is also present in Helena-West Helena (HWH) schools and in the story of some of the participants' professional mindsets. All educators using constructivism in their classrooms find ways to promote a space where students are active participants in their own knowledge formation. In these sites learners are not passive recipients of information (Fosnot, 1996; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1964; Vygotsky, 1978). Still, a widely influential theory, constructivism asks students to engage in the majority of the lesson plan on their own terms. Youth create knowledge and gain skills through experiential learning (Dewey, 1938). Quality instruction and learning depends on students gaining their own perspectives of content and taking risks through experimentation. Dewey (1938) states that educators must "have that sympathetic understanding of individuals as individuals, which gives him [or her and them] an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning" (p. 39). At its core, the theory supports practices in art education that engage diverse talents and multiple modes of learning.

Constructivist theory greatly influences methods used throughout art education (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1964; Thompson, 2015). Thompson (2015) states the basics of the theory:

> A constructivist perspective on learning positions children as innately equipped with the curiosity to explore the world and the capacity to find meaning in the objects, images, relationships, and events they encounter. Ultimately… Constructivism shifts the balance that transmission models of instruction leave unquestioned, moving from convictions about the adult responsibility to share knowledge accumulated by prior generations to belief in the ability of each new generation to produce knowledge of their own. Envisioning children as knowledge producers, as capable creators of values and meanings, constructivist pedagogies situate the child, or children, at the center of the process of learning. (p.119)

In constructivist learning, traditional relationships between teachers and students break down and learning becomes mutual. In the arts and art making, even the traditional relationship of apprentice and master is subject to de-construction. Instead of having the teacher lecture on specific subjects, the students make art that re-contextualizes that subject. The learning space becomes a place where educators facilitate experiences, often experiences led by youth.

Like the decentralized learning environments in the programs developed by Adejumo as presented in the CBAE subsection, any open-ended learning in a group setting is widely accepted by proponents of constructivist theory. Constructivist theory celebrates the de-centralization of learning and the ultimate opening of doors for all participants. Community members enter a learning space with all levels of art making skill. Often these spaces leave room for all members to drive individual and/or group learning. Ayers (2010) advocates all educators must truly recognize their students:

> A commitment to the visibility of students as persons requires a radical reversal: all teachers must become students of *their* students. The students become teachers as well as learners. The teacher attends to the students in order to support growth and learning—we are side by side working in concert to know the world. (Ayers, 2010, p. 26)

In the breakdown of the student and teacher relationship, learning becomes a collaborative experience. In the context of the field of art education, the teachers and the students become co-collaborators in the learning process. Essentially, constructivism extends states of learning for all kinds of students into rampant collaboration.

SOCIAL JUSTICE MINDSETS

When looking at other ways learning communities start to embrace social justice as a learning tool, educators draw on the power of CBAE's direct social agenda. Many educators and artists engage in conversation about the direct ties between social justice initiatives and the actual make-up of learning spaces and the people or institutions in power. There are several mindsets that emerge, almost like parameters, for making learning spaces more and more equal. My students had a part in the design of our mural: however, was the school structure supporting the oppressions already deeply prevalent in their lives as Black Americans? Given this case-study's efforts to design a program where participants enter from many different socio-economic backgrounds, the very mindsets that help educators avoid oppressive traps are necessary. The study's findings must acknowledge the mindsets that social justice advocates use to halt oppressive practices and free up student-led learning.

In addition to evaluating content and investigating how the classroom links to social justice mindsets, Marshall (2014) explains the power of creativity when learning to facilitate a critique of violence. In a world with rising violence against minorities of all kinds, art education spaces may act as a counteracting forces, like large therapy sessions designed to provide healing from violence. Marshall argues that the art classroom can be a place to express emotional pain, which provides an opportunity for healing to begin and for community members to support each other. Art becomes a place where learning is a place of celebrating differences, and Marshall (2014) believes that art,

> makes differences the source of new understanding, connection, and richness… When students walk into the art class, they are waking into a paradigm of the place where differences are needed and celebrated. It is the place where each student's unique view of the world is asked for and valued. (pp. 38-39)

Providing a space where youth can use their art to heal and connect demands individuals and communities be heard and protected. With self-care at the center of art making, many students are able to find peace and healing. Educators using this mindset create more equal partnerships with students and empower students to become life-long learners and makers.

Many learning theories ask learning communities to acknowledge the specific ways all participants communicate. Advocates of social justice would ask: is the group speaking (linguistic capital), behaving, and thinking (cultural capital) inside and outside of privileged Euro-American values? Too often art educators are unaware of standards that de-legitimize some students' linguistic and cultural capital, which can be defined as symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). A very radical part of art education asks

classroom participants to draw upon a tradition of re-imagining the world in order to envision what constitutes an ideal community. Anderson et al. (2010) state that art education for social justice,

> centers art forms, visual artifacts, performances, and educational activities that encourage social equity and the opportunity for all people to achieve their vocational, professional, personal, social, and economic goals in the world. This entails using the aesthetic as the central strategy for exposing, deconstructing, disarming, and acting out against those aspects of culture that promote inequity, that are socially and psychologically manipulative, one-side, dishonest, or repressive, as well as for constructing visions that provide or potentially provide equal opportunities for all. (p. 5)

Collaborations and spaces that encourage social equity are important to the re-imagining of a different world for students (Anderson et al, 2010). In the spirit of extending "beyond fixing problems to developing solutions. This ability to unleash our' social' imagination' - to help us envision the world differently -- makes community-based arts a uniquely important type of social change strategy" (Knight et al., 2006 p. xxiv). When considering the power of art as a way for students to re-imagine and problem solve in the world, protecting personal expression cannot be overlooked in a community's plan to empower youth.

Many Black artists write about how individual existence is a radical state of being. As an artist herself, the Black poet Audre Lorde wrote a self-proclaimed "biomythography" entitled *Zami A New Spelling of my Name,* and published a collection of essays and speeches entitled *Sister Outsider*, both of which are filled with experiences of finding personal freedom as a Caribbean-American, radical feminist, and lesbian. She proclaimed "writing was the only thing that made me feel like I was alive" (Lorde, 1982,

p. 118). Included in the works are her selections of poetry, often proclaiming the power of self-care for artists and the protection of art education spaces. How do young people of all gender and sexuality identifications use their artistic, often divergent, drives to make meaning and create new definitions of freedom? Historians like Robin D. G. Kelley promote that Black feminism provides the most unique insights into liberating everyone and that dreams are a crucial part of creating true freedom for all types of communities and collaborations. He is interested in spaces that foster not just the "current injunction to 'keep it real'… we need to move beyond the real and make it surreal" (Kelley, 2002, p. 193). Radical programs must reserve space and facilitate collaborations for all artists, especially the individuals proving the world wrong as thriving creators and dreamers.

Within programming for any kind of community space, educators of all backgrounds must take into account how social justice theories influence the learning environment. When considering HWH's predominant population of Black youth, educators must know they are designing radical spaces that are aiding the next generation to be able to re-make the future and confront the negative patterns of the past and present.

COMMUNITY ARTS IN HELENA-WEST HELENA

Helena-West Helena holds a place in U.S. history unlike many other towns--a history of complicated systems of economic influence of what Cobb describes in his book *The Most Southern Place on Earth* as a town with extreme wealth and extreme poverty co-existing, even today (Cobb, 1992). Even in the widest gaps of "haves" and "have not's," artists in Helena-West Helena have always brought layered perspectives to the

history of the Delta. While a detailed look into the history of the region is not necessary here, the presence of music, agriculture, and a deep and complicated history of creative expression is present in the participant interviews. Economic opportunity may be shrinking for youth wishing to stick around, yet the celebration of culture and history is rich and frequent for youth. Generations of families living in the rural town stretch to well before the Civil War, stories of pain and joy laced in between the decades until now. A description of the landscape and people calling the region home cannot be fully achieved in this thesis. Also, one should not assume the emphasis in the literature review on social justice ignores the successful and active efforts of the many residents that call the Delta home today. I am not from the region and I can only speak of the arts community from my experience as an arts educator. While my case-study presents a quest to approach educational spaces with greater awareness of systemic oppression and chronic poverty, the choice to source data directly from fifteen residents attempts to honor a legacy of voice and innovation in the region that cannot be celebrated enough. The story of community arts in HWH is full of all the layers of human experience. Instead of a focus on problems and challenges in the community, what large-scale innovation can be teased from a deeper look into the mindsets and the assets of HWH residents currently directing youth through an arts-based mentorship?

Speaking mostly from my own experience teaching in the region, I observed many different learning spaces throughout the community during my former years and during the site-visits and research for this case-study. In charter schools, private schools, and public schools, art teachers have been present for quite a long time. There are two or

three museums in town, including one with a permanent exhibition of Blues music and Blues musicians from the area. There is a library, but no major events or partnerships. Summer programs exist but are limited in availability. After-school arts clubs do exist, as teachers often remark about how difficult it is to maintain any consistent arts instruction during school hours and testing schedules. With recent rumors of the state taking over the public schools in HWH, the threat of cutting arts programs often looms over the community. Still, some artists offer private lessons and collect sponsorships for qualifying applicants. Churches and community centers frequently host weekend choir events and offer many opportunities in music for youth.

A vibrant artist community exists in town (and online), with many taking inspiration from the Mississippi River, music, or agriculture in the region. Recent efforts from local nonprofits have brought festivals and various opportunities for local artists to sell their artwork. Artists often travel regionally to take their goods to various markets along the Blues Highway. Other artists around town are content to make art in their home studios, using the quiet of the country as a main strategy. Rumors of artist co-ops have emerged several times, but still the community seems to keep to themselves. Social media has a presence among the artists and more and more education groups are using the Internet to promote their activities. The local Chamber of Commerce even has a newsletter that has gained great popularity in recent years. Efforts to bring the community together through art are happening, as seen in monthly fairs and pop-up galleries. From the festivals to the landscape, many artists participate in the community's efforts, big and small.

Designers from Thrive, a design firm focused on community-based methods, started one of the main festivals supported by a section of the arts community. A recent addition to the arts community, they began hosting this annual festival series in 2011. Thrive opened over ten years ago primarily as a design firm. In addition to the festival, Thrive hosts a business incubator course and discounted rates for local businesses needing graphic design services. In December 2015, Thrive announced an artist-in-residence program through their Facebook page. Presented as Figure 1, the announcement arrived to usher in one of the largest funding opportunities for artists working in the area. Artists will live on stipends and access studios and gallery spaces. While not the only opportunity in the region, the presence of nonprofits like Thrive provide needed support for artists living and working in the region.

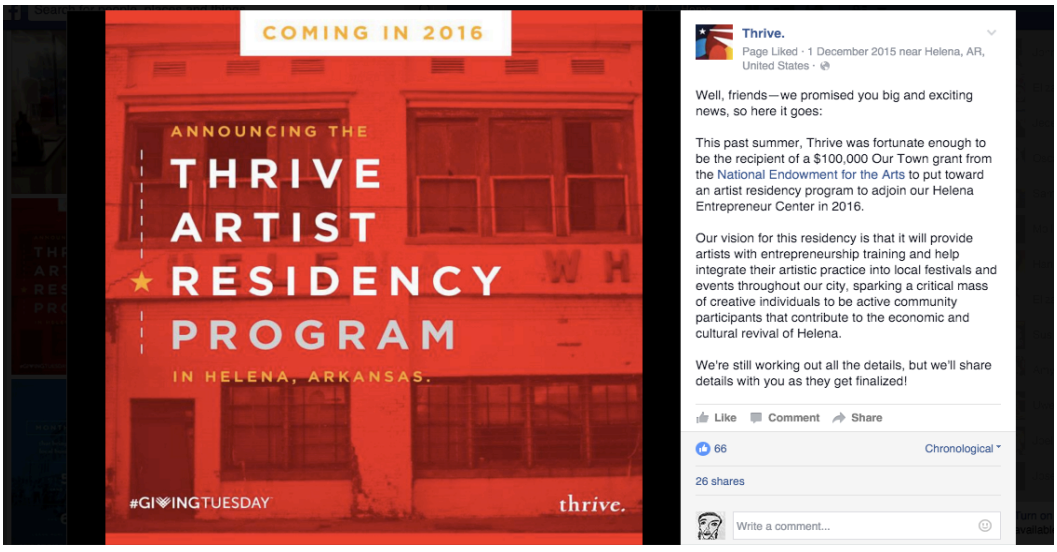

Figure 2: Thrive Facebook Announcement.

INFLUENTIAL PROGRAM FRAMEWORKS

Many frameworks influence a teacher's decision-making process when designing a program, no matter where the classroom exists. Any one person designing a program for youth is going to operate within the movements of the field of Art Education. In order to gain greater insights into the research findings within this case-study, the following section explores a few frameworks chosen for their widely adopted perspectives within the field. While the results of this case-study are drawn mostly from collected data, the results can be looked at and compared to several existing trends. Educators and practitioners have already spent considerable time looking at what makes programs empowering places for students and borrowing their ideas for analysis provides deeper insights.

Arlene Goldbard (2006) in her book *New Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development* investigates community art projects that argue for cultural participation in creating community identities and re-creating broken community identities. Major parts of her writing include discussions of case studies of successful community art collaboration projects and the theory behind the successes, where even the idea of "success" is deconstructed. When speaking of cultural planning in any capacity, she states: "Planning needs a framework. What are planners aiming for? How do they know if they find it?" (2006, p. 229). Golbard (2006) continues with a framework in order to unify the field, stating the values of "active participation, diversity, equality of cultures, commitment to culture as a crucible for social transformation, prizing cultural expression as a process of emancipation, an encompassing understanding of culture, and

valuing artists as agents of transformation" (p. 229). At the end of her ninth chapter in *New Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development*, Goldbard (2006) presents seven watchwords for community development planning. The following framework is extremely useful for borrowing a sort of list for ensuring empowerment for students:

a) Be deeply participatory, with community members helping to shape the inquiry as well as providing the answers;
b) Reflect the entirety of the community, taking care to extend a real welcome to everyone, meeting people wherever they are;
c) Be multifaceted, providing a range of ways for people with different learning and communication styles, customs and comfort zones to take part;
d) Use arts media as well as conventional means of eliciting response, yielding many types of information that can build a thick, accurate description of what is and stimulate creative ideas of what could be;
e) Acknowledge people's participation and share the learning openly both in process and at the end of the process;
f) Be fearless truthful in conveying community truths to the powers-that-be without dissembling or running from healthy controversy; and
g) Follow through to implementation, working to ensure that decision-makers understand their accountability and results are consonant with the process. (pp. 234-235)

While lengthy, the considerations are focused on honoring the assets and mindsets of the participants. Goldbard's seven considerations offer an influential addition to this study's findings and proposed program design framework.

Expanding upon Goldbard's list, Grant Kester's (2011) *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* comments on art within a more expansive setting. He explores case-studies in multiple facets of collaboration, outlining potential models for replication in both rural and urban environments. Grounded in deep discussions of research, Kester argues that effective collaboration demands equal ownership of all parties. A detailed outline of Project Row Houses in Houston, Texas,

provides a case-study for an artist-in-residence that recruits Black artists from within the community. Speaking of the founder, Kester (2011) states: "Lowe's commitment to reframing the meaning of the Third Ward through the celebration of its cultural and architectural history and its traditions of mutual assistance challenges this perception" (p. 218). Programs that use this kind of collaborative and deep thinking set a precedent for the power of communities coming together through art and art education.

Suggesting another approach, Doug Borwick presents a universal approach of cultural mapping before beginning any project. According to Borwick (2012), "Listening to the stories of community and engaging in an open dialogue with current residents will help develop a map that truly represents the community and acknowledges the importance of the past on the current state of the cultural sector" (p. 151). Like the other influential frameworks, Borwick argues for an open-ended invitation to all community makers in the decision making and planning process. While the found assets and mindsets of HWH represent one specific community, these frameworks influence the study's ending program design guide. "Social Artistz" is a conceptual design, more like a paradigm for the community to embrace or not embrace. All participants would need equal ownership in celebrating HWH's history and engaging youth in an active celebration and engagement with the community's future.

CONCLUSION

The literature review requires the necessary time needed to investigate and help ground the study in the larger context of pertinent research. The field of art education is

vast, and boasts many contributions in both theory and real-world movements for arts communities everywhere. Looking specifically at CBAE and radical mindsets next to learning theories paints a picture for the study's research context. Learning spaces look like a lot of things and the context this study provides compliments the remaining chapters. The next step in this process is a discussion of the research methodology employed for this research, which is the direction and content making up the chapter that follows.

Chapter Three: Methodology

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Three provides a detailed overview of the study's design including data collection methods. The study sought a design capable of highlighting the assets and mindsets of the participants and the surrounding community while also comparing those findings to a larger framework of theories and applications of community art education in rural areas. The detailed overview in this chapter presents the following: first, a brief literature review of qualitative research; second, an overview of the data collection and the data analysis process; third, a look into the guiding paradigms and researcher positionality; and finally, an outline of the research participants including descriptions of their personalities, relevant context of roles, and any relevant demographic information. Maintaining ethical boundaries around the collection of data was very important in the design and implementation of the study as was maintaining positive relationships with those interviewed.

STUDY DESIGN

The study uses a model of inquiry based on qualitative methods for examining collected data. Each complex interview stands as a unique data sample that informs the bigger picture. In a later edition of writing, Creswell (2009) distinguishes more formal characteristics of the parameters of qualitative research:

(1) Research is collected in the natural context of the study; therefore, researchers have face-to-face interactions with participants over time.

(2) The researcher is directly responsible for data collection procedures including, but not limited to, conducting interviews and observations.

(3) There are typically multiple methods in which data is collected, including observations, interviews, and the examination of related documents.

(4) The analysis process of qualitative research is a back-and-forth dialogue in which concepts and themes are built from the ground up.

(5) The researcher keeps an understanding of the meaning that participants hold about the related issue at the forefront of his or her research.

(6) Research is emergent in design and can change as the researcher enters the field to collect data.

(7) A theoretical lens is often applied to qualitative research, in which the researcher considers social, political, or historical contexts of the problem statement under study.

(8) The researcher makes an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand.

(9) The research is holistic in nature, incorporating the perspectives of multiple participants.

The aforementioned characteristics of qualitative research were summarized from Creswell's book, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches* (2009). Both these more formal characteristics of qualitative research and the subjective nature of the data enable the investigator to answer the central question using trends and themes that emerge from the data. This methodology asks the investigator to make meaning in a way that highlights student voice and also discusses researcher bias. Also, understanding qualitative research includes action by the reader to validate voices of participants, student voices as equals with adult voices. Essentially, this methodology

framework of qualitative research celebrates individual articulation and provides room for complex analysis.

In review, the central research question is:

What are the primary mindsets and key assets of local community leaders, art teachers, artists, museum directors, and teenage youth in Helena-West Helena Arkansas surrounding the purposes and applications of art education in the community? Based on those findings, how might the key mindsets and assets be used in the design of a collaborative art program that inspires teenage youth to engage and or strengthen commitment to the community of Helena-West Helena through participation and inspiration from the proposed program?

Case-study methodology stood out as a research approach most poised to answer the study's central research question. For the purposes of this research, I limited the case study's scope to one series of interviews and a limited list of participants. The fifteen interviews conducted included a set time limit and also identified a certain amount of participants within a set boundary. Case study design includes identifying the case, defining and limiting the case, developing a central research question, employing data collection instruments, and analyzing and synthesizing collected data (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Reimer, 2012). Still, the delineated study had a bound length of time and with a single-site focus that qualified it as a holistic single-case design (Yin, 2003). Since I remained focused on just a tiny selection of the arts community, the study was limited to one unit of analysis. I developed a central research question after defining and limiting the case. Creswell (2007) states: "The case selected for study has boundaries, often bounded by

time and place. It also has interrelated parts that form a whole. Hence, the proper case to be studied is both bounded and a system" (p. 244). I employed data collection instruments as demonstrated, and analyzed and synthesized collection data based on a single case and set of participants (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Reimer, 2012).

Bounded in time place beyond my control but also the schedule of the participants, the study was conducted during a ten-day time span in the month of January 2016. The area of focus was in and around Helena-West Helena, Arkansas, with two interviews occurring in surrounding towns. Participants in those locations have some tie to Helena-West, Helena, either from the town or traveling back and forth consistently. A case study research design would answer my research question and provide possible themes around the assets and mindsets of my study participants. While my presence in the community exists within data in many ways discussed later, the analysis only takes into account one unit of analysis bound within time and space of the case study. All the participants I interviewed expressed themselves within the context of their own experience, the context of my questioning, and as parts of a larger conversation within arts community in Helena-West Helena. The research was conducted within an intrinsic case study, meaning that the "focus is on the case itself (e.g., evaluating a program, or studying a student having difficulty) because the case presents an unusual or unique situation" (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). My background as an educator with a relationship to many of the participants in the region plays a part in the planning and outcomes of the study. Yet, the unique and bound case limits the analysis to one unit, and prepares the reader to answer the central research question directly.

INITIATING THE RESEARCH & LOCATION

Original motivations for the study began during my teaching years in conversations with my students. The concepts stemming from those conversations helped form a full and engaging central research question. While I did not start collecting data until my approval from the Institutional Review Board, I maintained relationships that I had fostered during my teaching years through several trips and an internship with Thrive, the local design-based nonprofit. These partnerships helped inspire the study, but also bolstered an archive of interviews that Thrive used for the development of an artist-in-residence program. Given the nearly two-year gap since living in the region as a full-time K-12 arts educator, the summer internship and this early program design research served as an entry point back into the formal questioning I started in previous years. Developing a relationship with Thrive brought an internship opportunity where I explored early relationships with the arts community outside of public education settings. The time also helped me think about the specific research question I would pose.

During my time there, I re-acclimated to the community by participating in community art education summer programs at the local community college and through a local arts partnership organization. One camp was three weeks long and included a cross-collaboration of performing arts instruction and visual-arts course for upper elementary school students across multiple schools in the community. The other program was a weeklong course designed to serve as part fundraiser and other part local arts partnership event. Figure 2 features a clipping of me with a few students' featured in the news for a

summer workshop sponsored through the local community college. These community educational spaces gave me a glimpse into the summer opportunities offered to youth.

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LOCAL

ASHTD to begin work on area highways

Weather permitting, the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department will begin sealing state highways at the locations described below, according to Ray Woodruff, District Engineer. These sections of highways will be sealed during the period of July 7 thru July 10.
In Lee County, the following area will be sealed:
Highway 121, section 3, a distance of 7.8 miles from Vinyard to LaGrange.
Bituminous surface treatment (liquid asphalt and pea gravel) is a tried and proven method of sealing cracks and providing a durable wearing surface utilizing local materials at an economical cost. It usually takes from four to eight days from the time the material is placed until the loose material is swept off the roadway. The time varies with the length of the section being surfaced and weather conditions.
Motorists are urged to use caution when traveling on a highway that is undergoing this treatment because the gravel can cause glass breakage when it is kicked up by a vehicle that is traveling too fast for conditions.
Numerous signs are placed approaching the work area and throughout the job to warn motorists of the conditions and restricting speed to 25 miles per hour. Speed is the primary factor in reducing glass damage. Local law enforcement agencies are often asked to assist in controlling traffic.

STATE

Texas man dies in east Arkansas interstate wreck

PALESTINE (AP) — Authorities say a Texas man was killed when his car crashed

EDUCATION

HWHSD making major technology upgrades

Submitted

The Helena-West Helena School District is investing in technology upgrades over the summer that will place it in the upper echelon of school districts in the state in terms of technology capacity.

The project, being paid for out of NSLA funds with restricted uses, will greatly benefit the district and position it well for the instruction required in the digital age.

Superintendent Suzann McCommon said, "Our school district will now have excellent network access and capacity in every classroom. Very few districts will be able to compare with what we will have when this project is finished."

The project will result in an increase of over 400 percent of hard wired Ethernet connections available in each classroom. Also, the wifi network capacity in each classroom will also be drastically improved.

School Board President Andrew Bagley was particularly excited about the project. He said, "With all tasks in society requiring some use of technology, it is important that our students become familiar with using these devices daily. Instruction is requiring more incorporation of technology in the classroom. All of the testing is moving online. In fact, we were one of the pilot districts for online testing this year and our network performed admirably prior to these upgrades, which is a testament to our leadership, our technology staff and the assistance of technology personnel from the Great Rivers Service Cooperative."

Bagley continued, "This is just another example of great things that are happening every day in HWHSD. Our school district is moving in a positive direction and the people of this community can have confidence supporting us in our efforts to continue moving forward. Parents can feel confident enrolling their children in our schools. It's an exciting time to be a Cougar."

EDUCATION

Getting creative at Workshop in the Arts

Loving the engaging creativity of art, these Workshop in the Arts participants are shown with their art teacher, Ruth Linford (third from left), who has numerous projects in store for them this summer. The participants include Amaya Valley (from left), Kaylan Harris and Ja'Niylah Fonzie. MARLA CLARK PHOTO

STATE

ASP, local police plan holiday crackdown

Submitted

The summer travel season is already underway and many Arkansans are preparing to be on the road during the Fourth of July holiday. Unfortunately these celebrations can take a tragic turn when a person decides to drive a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol or ignore the posted speed limit.

In order to promote safer travel, the Arkansas State Police and other state and local law enforcement agencies will join forces in a special crackdown targeting drunk driving and speeding violations beginning June 28th and continuing through July 14th.

"The Fourth of July has proven to be one of the deadliest holidays on

SEE POLICE, PAGE 3

Figure 3: Newspaper Clipping

Once I had approval from the Institutional Review Board sometime after the summer internship, I recruited my participants and set up the interviews during my research trip there from January to February of 2016. Given that I drove to the location and arranged times in person with voluntary participants, the eight days filled my time with nearly back-to-back appointments. Given my past involvement as an educator and conducting research in the region, many of the participants included people I had worked with in previous community involvement. Once I obtained the necessary consent, the interviews proceeded as I recorded data and documented possible insights into answering the central research question of the case-study. All interviews were conducted on private property or in public places and then transcribed for coding and analysis upon my return to Texas.

PARADIGMS GUIDING STUDY & RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

When conducting qualitative research, the investigator is not objective. One's perspectives are shaped by one's positionality (i.e., one's ethnicity, race, cultural background, gender, socio-economic status, religion, and more). These perspectives affect one's worldview and in turn one's worldview affects the researcher's motivations. Many qualitative paradigms and viewpoints guided the direction of the study, and this section discusses my worldview and research intent within the contexts the paradigms of this study bring. Within a research boundary, a paradigm can be defined as a set of beliefs that affect actions (Creswell, 2007). Social constructivism and advocacy/participatory are two paradigm definitions explored in this study and the resulting project design.

The research relying on the social constructivism paradigm is related to the theory of constructivism (Forsno, 1996; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1964; Vygotsky, 1978). Much like the theory of constructivism within education theory, knowledge in this study is viewed as flexible, in flux rather than static truth. Any views of participants are looked at both socially created and individually valid. Creswell (2007) states that this kind of study design asks that all participant views "…are subjective meanings [that] are negotiated socially and historically." He continues: "In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (2007, p. 21). The players shape the game but it must be acknowledged that the game also shapes the player.

The cultural and historical contexts of the interviewees affected the interviews, just as my own cultural and historical context affected the ways in which I conducted the interviews. The collaborative nature of the research methodology helps me understand the "complexity of [their] views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). I asked open-ended questions and relied on recorded digital files of my interviews in order to maintain the voices of the participants as much as possible. I derived meanings from a natural development of the ideas and not necessarily from any anticipated outcome. In these ways and more, the formation of knowledge was collaborative but also subjective and complex.

The second paradigm discussed in the parameters of the study is the advocacy/participatory paradigm, a place where the study finds the direct application of a

program design. In the support of an approach to research that advocates for equality, Creswell (2007) states:

> The issues facing these marginalized groups are of paramount importance to study, issues such as oppression, domination, suppression, alienation, and hegemony. As these issues are studied and exposed, the researchers provide a voice for these participants, raising their consciousness and improving their lives. (pp. 21-22)

Given that the findings from the study pour directly into the design of a program aimed at the engagement of youth, the study must focus on listening to and responding to their voices. The approach remained "practical and collaborative because it [was] inquiry complete *with* others rather than *on* or *to* others" (Creswell, 2007, p. 22). As a teacher and artist in the region, the voices of my students took the top priority. As the co-editor of *Histories of Community-Based Art Education* (2001), Paul Bolin introduces "Community as Learning Group" in this statement: "Hearing the stories of others should cause us to pause and reflect on our own position in the world. What stories are woven into the fabric of who we are? What tales from our past have shaped and continue to form our lives today (pp. 69-70)? The collaborative format combined with the emphasis as active agents in the process of knowledge formation grounds the research in the advocacy and participatory paradigm.

Within advocacy/participatory writing, emphasis placed on highlighting assets rather than listing problems ultimately seeks to positively frame the analysis. Similar to Doug Borwick's research, this kind of approach seeks to shift traditional "outreach" approaches. Borwick (2012) writes in his book, *Building Communities, not Audiences*:

> Most outreach that is undertaken is done "for" the community, assuming that the arts organization understands what art the community needs. To be effective, successful engagement must be done "with" the community, based on reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships with the organizations or communities being served. (p. 33)

It is extremely important to continuously acknowledge the ethical parameters and responsibilities one has to participants around issues of approach and outcome (Creswell, 2005). Part of my role as an outsider in the community is at first to recognize myself as an outsider participating *with* an already established community.

Another large component to my approach is my own researcher bias. My own background limits the study and no doubt I brought a fair amount of bias to this investigation. The study was limited in many ways merely because I am not from the region. Readers may fail to gain deeper perspectives in the lives of my participants because of my inability to experience life outside my own experiences and background. More importantly, my background means I represent a privileged perspective even in my unconscious behaviors. I represent privilege and my position as a research in the South will not try to deny that fact. Despite and because of these considerations, I hope this study extends efforts of solidarity with communities of the Delta. For all art educators asking deeper questions about how best to empower students, the role of honesty is very important.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

As previously noted, I knew many of the participants quite well from years of continued contact since I left my teaching position in the public schools. While participation in the study was completely voluntary, participants were selected with subgroups in mind. Given pseudonyms to protect anonymity and privacy, the participants and their subgroup categories are represented below in Table 1: Research Participant Information. Nichols-Casebolt (2012) cites, "Ethically responsible research requires adequate protection of participants in the research we conduct" (p. 73). IRB, the local board comprised of overseeing research at The University of Texas at Austin (UT), is charged with determining whether proposed research meets ethical standards established by federal regulations and the Belmont Principles. While many of my contacts and attempted interviews could not be included due to a lack of consent, the interviews outlined in Table 1 illustrate the total number of participants and the pseudonyms appropriated in addition to demographic information. Table 1 outlines other aspects of the participants in the study. The fifteen participants and I met were from HWH, while others represented voices of transplants or individuals from places in other towns of the Eastern Arkansas portion of the Delta. Pseudonym-based brief summaries are found below, including relevant description regarding each participant's role within the context of the larger community.

Students

All students interviewed currently attend the same public school. While the two male students have always attended public school, the two female students have attended private school and also have been home-schooled. Some of the student participants engaged in community programming, but only two are currently enrolled in an art class at the high school. All of the students have lived in the Delta their entire lives. All express a love of art, but in many different ways.

Jackson: A Black male in his late teenage years, Jackson commutes to school in HWH from a nearby town nearly two hours every day. Remarking about many mindsets regarding his new public school, Jackson was surprised to find that the majority of his peers were also Black when we first arrived. He is also a musician and has plans to travel with his art.

Alex: A Black male in his late teenage years, Alex has lived in HWH since he was three years old. He likes to draw the Mississippi River, and he spoke of doing a mural project about his town's history, including themes around slavery. He loves the town, but remarked on some of the violence and different activities in town that were not positive for youth.

Marie: A white female in her teenage years, Marie actively embraces an artist identity. She is from HWH and takes inspiration from many art teachers and family members that are also interested in the arts. She is the twin-sister of Katie and is active in the community arts scene.

Katie: A white female in her teenage years, Katie is actively looking for opportunities to get to know more artists. Like her sister, Katie is from HWH and has attended a variety of schools and sought various art opportunities in the community including studying under artists in town. She wants to pursue a career in a science field.

Artists

Artists in the region also include the art educators and the one museum professional; however, this section illustrates artists that are openly identifying as artists but not necessarily playing other significant roles in the community. While each of the artists has other jobs, the interview collected mostly data about their creative careers and interests.

Sam: A white female in her early 20s, Sam is from the Midwest. She arrived in HWH after accepting a job with Thrive as a graphic designer. Sam participates with many community members through her work, and takes a large part in designing the materials and brand around Thrive Arts. She believes in her work as a professional having a direct relation to community development efforts. For Sam, her work as a graphic designer is the primary focus of her artistic work, rather than engaging in any kind of independent arts practice.

Beth and Parker: Both white, female, and in their early twenties, this art collective is made up of two artists that met in art school in Memphis. Beth was hired as a graphic designer and she recruited Parker a year later to move to HWH and start their print collective: Printing Helena. In addition to Evelyn, Beth and Parker mentioned

feminism and the role of a social consciousness as a part of their academic study of art. Speaking to many different styles of art, Beth and Parker collaborate to create posters and design materials that tell a story about the Delta.

Charlie: Black female, Charlie is nineteen and lives in a nearby town in the Delta. Originally from HWH, Charlie was a former student of mine. She now identifies as an artist still very interested in doing murals with her peers. She is working now in order to save money to finish her college degree. As the only artist represented that is originally from HWH, Charlie speaks of life growing up as a truly difficult task. Having been Charlie's art teacher in previous years, I know that the role of art played a deeply therapeutic one for her.

Museum Professionals

Museum jobs are rare in the Delta, although as stated, the area does boast a fair amount of state funding to run a museum focused on culture and history in the Delta. I found only one participant that fit this demographic profile sub-section, an area of weakness in the study's data sampling.

Ray: A white male in his mid-60s, Ray moved to HWH as a museum professional seeking work at one of the local museums. He is the curator, and actively recruits artists from the Delta and the surrounding area, including Memphis. I worked with Ray in previous years when I would take my classes to see rotating exhibitions at the museum. He is also a practicing artist with plans to retire and paint full-time in Memphis. As a

curator, Ray started bringing in rotating exhibitions and sought out many schools. His watercolor and pencil drawings can be found in the local tourist store.

Art Educators

All the art educators identified in this study practice art themselves. Some of the educators I knew previously, having met them during my years of teaching. Evelyn and I taught together during a community arts program. Also identifying as artists, these educators contribute many perspectives to the study's key findings.

Evelyn: A white female in her mid-50s, Evelyn is an active community art educator and artist. I taught with her during one summer at a community arts youth camp. She keeps in touch with many other Delta artists and also travels to locations in the region, particularly to various arts markets and fairs. She lives just outside of HWH and is actively involved in the social media of HWH's art collectives. Evelyn spends considerable time outlining the artistic interests of her children, naming many musical mentors that served her son, including many music legends.

Bryan: A Black male in his 50s, Bryan is an active artist in the community and part time art educator at a charter school. Also a preacher, Bryan is a community leader and many of the students interviewed in this study have him as their teacher. He sells his artwork often at various events, being an active watercolorist painter operating out of his home studio. Clearly a mentor to some of his students, two of which I interviewed. He brings more of his own artwork and process into his classes, which he teaches part time.

He has not spent a lot of time marketing his own artwork, mostly developing series of watercolor paintings and drawings.

Benjamin: A white male is his 50s, Benjamin is an artist and art educator originally from Hot Springs, Arkansas. Soon to retire, Benjamin has lived in HWH for nearly thirty years and spent most of that time working full-time in public schools. Having taught for nearly thirty years, he looks forward to retirement. His primary focus has always been his personal artwork, working privately in his studio. He mostly works alone. He makes religious comic books, and sells them on Amazon.

Community Leaders

As the least specific sub-section of participants, this category brings into perspective the presence of leaders in the community working to provide opportunities for youth development. All the community leaders, but one, are from Arkansas, with one being from Little Rock and one growing up within HWH. Adversely, Paul arrived with me through Teach For America. One of the community leaders is also an artist, although he would claim that his skills rely heavily on the music side of the arts. Responding with mindsets and assets of the community in very different ways, the community leaders want more arts programming for youth.

Paul: A South-Asian American in his late twenties, Paul moved to HWH through Teach For America's placement program. After his two years of placement teaching, he stayed and now works in several different educational environments. As a community leader, he helped start a community center in downtown HWH. Feeling instantly at home,

Paul chose to buy a house in order to continue contributing to the community and eventually run for city office. Paul works with several nonprofits and school groups in town helping to build a new community center downtown. Paul claims no interest in developing his artistic side in a career focus.

Carl: In his late 30s, Carl is a Black male working directly with many ages of youth at the Boys and Girls Club. As a community leader, Carl is also active in the music scene. He performs regularly and believes that HWH's musical heritage is his to carry forward for generations. He speaks to his family in the interview quite a bit, using his daughter's interest in the arts as a major point of conversation. Carl helped get a community center going for kids, writing some of the initial grants and continuing to build programming as the manager of this center.

Kimmie: In her early 30s, Kimmie is a white female that has been working in HWH with a non-profit in various degrees. As the current director of the nonprofit, she manages various youth programs that focus on literacy. Originally from Little Rock, Kimmie moved to HWH about seven years ago. Deeply influenced by some of the artists in the community, much of my conversation with Kimmie included her thoughts about the many changing perspectives and what reciprocity actually means with youth engagement.

Participant	Age/ Grade	Study Subgroup
Jackson	12th Grade	Student
Alex	9th Grade	Student
Marie	10th Grade	Student
Katie	10th Grade	Student
Sam	20s	Artist
Beth, Parker	20s	Art Collective (2)
Evelyn	50s	Art Educator, Artist
Bryan	50s	Art Educator, Artist
Charlie	20s	Artist
Benjamin	50s	Art Educator, Artist
Ray	60s	Museum Professional
Paul	20s	Community Leader
Carl	30s	Community Leader, Artist
Kimmie	30s	Community Leader

Table 1: Research Participant Information

For the research, I interviewed a total of fifteen individuals, with two of those individuals representing one art collective to make a total of fourteen interviews. Eight of the participants identified as female while seven did so as male. Five of the interviewees

are Black, one is South-Asian American, and the remaining nine participants are white. Ethical treatment of the subjects was paramount, with the researcher holding to strict guidelines especially during recruitment. While I knew many of the participants personally, some were acquaintances in the community and represented their subgroups at random. Other participants were former students.

DATA COLLECTION

Trip Dates

I made many informal trips to the Arkansas region before conducting the data collection portion of the research, including living there for a summer to work on research with Thrive. Data was collected within ten days during February 2016. I conducted fourteen interviews with fifteen total participants. We met on private property and all interviews lasted under an hour. Totaling fourteen interviews, each recording contributed to helping answer the research question.

Interviews

The fourteen interviews were semi-structured, in that I prepared the wording and order of questions beforehand. However, during interviews there was room for flexibility and probing for elaboration (Merriam, 1998). Table 2 outlines the general question bank used to engage the participants in the study, sectioned out by subgroup. Depending on answers to the open-ended questions and the individual participant's role in the arts

community, I highlighted sections of questions over others that could be asked. Mostly, the interviews were conducted in a way that felt natural and encouraged open-ended conversation. Many participants were asked questions from multiple sections of the question bank, as many of the participants represent various subgroups in the community. While individual interviews varied in the use of questions, the overall themes of the questioning included general information, artistic interests, art education, and community. All interviews were voluntary and included varying degrees of consent, either verbal for those participants over the age of 18, or a full parent permission form for those participants under age 18.

Table 2: Questions and Topics used by Researcher

Questions and Topics used by Researcher	
General Information	When did you first move to HWH? Or, where did you grow up in HWH? What is your education and experience?
	How would you describe your art to someone that didn't know you? Tell me about your role as a member of this artist community and any plans to stay involved. Why do you stay in Helena-West Helena? Why not?
	What else do you want to add?
	Other subjects: Years teaching, what schools, what grade, school experience, post-high school plans
Artistic Interests	How would you describe your experience as an artist? Describe your experience working with other artists.
	How do you make art? What is your own studio practice? How long have you been making art? How has your art changed? Do you plan to make a career out of being an artist?
	Does the Delta have a role in your artwork? If yes, how or in what ways? Do you see yourself making artwork in the future here?
	Where do you pursue these interests? And how often?
	What are your inspirations? Do learning spaces influence your artwork (teaching or being a student)?

	What are things that artists and can do that other artists can't do?
	where can your art be found? Do you sell your artwork? Do you have opportunities to display your artwork? If so, where?
	How would you describe your work?
	Other subjects: how themes have changed, artwork of peers
Art Education	Who are your artist mentors and why? What artists have you or do you work with? Where have you learned the most in art?
	What do you believe the purpose of art education is? What are your goals and views with art education? How have your goals changed?
	What has been your experience as an art student/teacher? What is your background as a teacher/student?
	Who are your inspirations? What influences your teaching?
	What got you interested in art/teaching? What has kept your interest?
	What is your idea of an art education community? What makes students or teachers stand out? What is your experience in your own art education?
	Other subjects: careers in the arts, opportunities for art studies post graduation, curriculum projects, student engagement, art club, personal experiences of arts spaces, how themes have change, classroom descriptions
Community	How do interact with artists/art educators/community leaders/museum directors/etc? What is your ideal artist community or community in general?
	What would you say are your key assets of this community?
	What are the opportunities for artists in Helena-West Helena? What kind of impacts do artists make in the Delta?
	Describe life in the Delta and in the community? What is life like for artists in Helena-West Helena?
	What projects would you do in a community space? What part of Helena-West Helena would you like to get to know more?
	What keeps you connected to the community and what keeps you disconnected? What are your views of the community?
	Other subjects: historical influences, related subjects, community arts projects for youth, how themes have changed, advice for new or existing students/adults

Table 2 Continued

DATA COLLECTED & LIMITATIONS

The amount of data collected varied according to each interview conducted and what subgroup the participant represented. The participants voluntarily submitted their answers, and I recorded and transcribed all interviews. Selections included in Chapter Four's presentation of themes include details and snippets of conversations. Transcripts were not included as the high amount of personal information threatened anonymity. Names of the participants, representing all ages, have been changed and any information or details that identify the participant in a recognizable role have been removed from any presented evidence. Given special permission from Thrive, any participants and data directly related to Thrive activities have been kept in association with the organization's real identity. However, all efforts have been made to remove the recognizable identity of all participants in the study. I was limited to collecting data during the interview in relation to the case study. I did take personal notes and reflections during the interviews in addition to recording with a digital audio recorder and later transcribing each interview.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data gathered comprised of the researcher's notes and reflections. In addition to these forms of data, transcribed interview were coded for reoccurring themes. Thomas (2006) advocates for an approach using inductive sorting and analyzing of qualitative data. The reader sees the researcher's personal insight as a result of the inductive process in the data analysis methods. Given my own background as a previous educator in the

area, the study capitalized on the opportunity to use reflection. Reflection in this sense is a process that includes searching to find out how the data adds to an explanation of the research question (Layder, 2013). The research question frames many of the research findings, and emergent themes played a large part in the remainder of the process.

After considering initial reflection and index of coding terms, I compared and contrasted emerging themes from the interviews. Soon the emergent and recurring themes appeared in the data in patterns (Denscombe, 2003). In order to examine the themes, I used the process of in-vivo coding. Basically, in-vivo coding is the technique of creating codes directly drawn from data sets. For example, I read through the interviews and instantly found themes that stood out across each interview. These codes can be found listed in alphabetical order in the Figure 3: Coding System Symbols.

AA = Art Appreciation
AAC = Advanced Art Class, AP Class
AAW = Art Award
AC = Art Club
ADAP = Arkansas Delta Arts Partnership
AGR = Agriculture
AM = Art Mentor
APC = Art program cuts
ARC = Architecture
ARST = Styles
ART = Artists
ARTSU = Art as a Subject
AS = Art Show
ASC = After-School Club/Organization
ASSE = Assessment/Evaluation
AT = Art and Technology
AY = Age Difference
BEPR = Behavior Problems
BL = Black, Black Community
BLU = The Blues
BOA = Board Membership
BOO = Booth
C = Caucasian/White
CA = Careers in Art
CAC = Community Art
CACT = Creative, Creative Activity
CC = Church Community
CG = Changing Goals, Change
CLA = School Class, Economic Class
CLO = Clothes/Fashion
COAR = Community of Artists
COL = Color
COLAB= Collaborate
COM = Community
COMB = Comic Books
COSE = Community Service
CP = Community Problem
CR = Crime or Illegal activity
CS = Community Solution
CUP = Curriculum Planning
DAN = Dance
DIV = Diversity
DOO = Drawing Doodling
DRA = Drawing
E = Education, Education Status
ED = Economic Decline
EI = Extra Interest
ENB = Enjoying Job Experience
EMJ = Economic Status, Money, Job
ENV = Environment / Surroundings
EO = everyday objects
ETH = Ethnicity (was also Race)
EVE = Events, Festivals
FAC = Facilities
FAM = Family
FE = Feelings/Emotions
FRE = Freedom
FRI = Friends/Peers
GA = Graphic Arts / Graphic Design
GAL = Gallery
GEN = Gender
GR = Group
HIS = History
HUNT = Hunting
I = Identity
IN = Individual
ITA = Interest in the Arts
JE = Jewelry
KT = Kids and Technology
L = Learning
LAN = Landscape/Nature
LJB = Lack of Enjoyable Job Experience
LOA = Lack of Activity
LOEX = Lack of Experience
LOI = Lack of Interest
LOT = Lot of Time / Quiet
M = Music
MA = Manga
MEN = Mentor
MOV = Movies
MR = The Mississippi River and Nature
MUR = Murals
MUS = Museum
NAT = Nature
NEWS = Newsletter
NGEN = Next Generation
OOI = Outsider vs Insider
PAI = Painting
PAP = Personal Art Practice
PC = Plantations/Cotton
PEO = People and Relationships
PM = Perception/Mindset

Figure 4: Coding System Symbols

In-vivo codes are not pre-determined, rather they are created from trends found in data sets upon deepened review (Benaquisto, 2008). I reviewed the transcripts of the interviews and any notes that I took in my notebook and marked common themes in a larger document of indexed patterns. Sometimes the codes were taken from participant themes and sometimes the topics were summarized as a part of larger symbols. Overall, the process was "systematic, comprehensive (searching all the data until the categories are saturated) and cumulative, gradually building understanding or explanations" (Simons, 2009, p. 121). As one can observe in Figure 3, there were many codes used but

in order to be qualified as a theme, the code needed to be a pattern across multiple participants.

The following is a more detailed set of steps used in the coding process. Creswell (2009) guides the research through the following process:

(1) Organize and prepare the data through transcribing interviews, typing up field notes, and sorting.
(2) Thoroughly read all data to gain a general sense of the type of information collected and then reflect on emergent ideas and the overall meaning of the data.
(3) Implement a process, referred to as coding, to organize material into segments of text that relate to one another.
(4) Generate and identify emergent themes from the coded text.
(5) Consider how emergent themes are presented in the qualitative narrative.
(6) Make an "interpretation or meaning of the data." (p.189)

In addition to using that process with my interviews, I also utilized triangulation (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Reimer, 2012) by employing various methods of data collection to validate my research findings through multiple perspectives and participant insights. The primary method used to collect data was through interviewing and note taking. Triangulation uses "multiple perceptions to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen" (Stake, 1998, p. 97). The process of triangulation and the priority of using multiple perspectives strengthens internal validity (Merriam, 1998, p. 207). While the sources are pulled mainly just from the interviews and any notes taken during the interviews, themes arose after these were examined from perspectives and drawn from numerous participants. Analysis relies heavily on coding to present common themes that support findings and ultimately the design of a program for youth in HWH.

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarized the methodology of research used and various aspects of its mixed-method approach, including my reasons for selecting the case study framework. Framing the methodology used in the research, this chapter contextualized a particular time and place of the case study, including an introduction to participants and data collection. Looking at the transcripts of interviews from research participants, the data was analyzed through a content-analysis approach. The study includes a constructivist design, and in conducting this study I explored and discussed my unique positionality as an educator and researcher within the region and the study. The voices of the participants and their own perspectives on assets and mindsets remain central to the study and the discussion of the results. The following chapter includes results of the study.

Chapter Four: Results

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four presents an overview of the analysis and outcomes of this case-study. As detailed previously, the findings from the study originate from the interview transcripts and notes I recorded during the interviews. Once gain, the research question is as follows:

What are the primary mindsets and key assets of local community leaders, art teachers, artists, museum directors, and teenage youth in Helena-West Helena Arkansas surrounding the purposes and applications of art education in the community? Based on those findings, how might the key mindsets and assets be used in the design of a collaborative art program that inspires teenage youth to engage and or strengthen commitment to the community of Helena-West Helena through participation and inspiration from the proposed program?

From analyzing the collective data, I formed themes within the research findings to answer this question by using inductive strategies such as coding transcripts and organizing data. Following the presentation of the research findings, I outlined each theme starting with the mindsets and finishing with the assets. Six themes emerged from my analysis of the data. These six themes present the specific ways in which each participants' lived experiences interact and shape the specific theme identified. Key findings from these themes are presented in the next chapter (Chapter 5) including a program design guide entitled "Social Artistz."

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section delves into the many research findings drawn from the case-study. With the help of an index of codes as seen in the previous chapter (Figure 3), six themes became evident after carefully combing the data for various patterns that emerged in the codes. The presentation of these themes begins to answer the essential question. The focus on the six themes naturally progresses into the final chapter's presentation of a program design.

The six themes below are divided into primary mindsets and key assets. As defined in Chapter One for the purposes of this case-study, mindsets are the common patterns of attitudes, beliefs, paradigms, and perceptions about a subject that underpin past and current actions and experiences. Assets are defined as the essential talents and strengths as seen through past or current produced work or production strategies. Based on those definitions, the data reveal the following six themes:

1. Opportunity Mindsets
2. Changing Perspectives Mindsets
3. Creative Careers Mindsets
4. People and Relationships Assets
5. Public Arts Assets
6. Historical Assets

Given the breadth of the interviews, the coding process revealed many themes. These themes are teased out in the following figures: Figure 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5. While the patterns can also be found in the words of the participants, these figures look at frequency of the codes as they were used with all participants. After identifying these patterns, looking back through the transcripts confirmed the qualitative findings.

4 word phrases frequency :

Expression	Expression count	Frequency	Prominence
pla pla pla pla	5	0.2%	9.6
art art art art	5	0.2%	88.7
tech tech tech tech	3	0.1%	1.8
art pla art pla	3	0.1%	73.8
sa sa sa sa	2	0.1%	3.5
pm fe cg pla	2	0.1%	6.9
peo pla peo pla	2	0.1%	10.1
colab eve peo colab	2	0.1%	51.5
peo colab eve peo	2	0.1%	51.6
eve peo colab eve	2	0.1%	51.6
coar com coar com	2	0.1%	53.5
com fac gal tfa	2	0.1%	59.8
sch you cact cla	2	0.1%	61.5
as com fac gal	2	0.1%	71.6
art pla sa art	2	0.1%	73.5
pla art pla art	2	0.1%	73.8
art cg art cg	2	0.1%	83.7

Figure 5: Four Code Frequency

5 word phrases frequency :

Expression	Expression count	Frequency	Prominence
pla pla pla pla pla	4	0.2%	9.6
art art art art art	4	0.2%	88.7
tech tech tech tech tech	2	0.1%	1.7
peo colab eve peo colab	2	0.1%	51.5
eve peo colab eve peo	2	0.1%	51.6
pla art pla art pla	2	0.1%	73.8
art pla art pla art	2	0.1%	73.9

Figure 6: Five Code Frequency

Keyword Density x1 x2 x3		Keyword Density x1 x2 x3		Keyword Density x1 x2 x3	
pla	162 (7%)	peo pla	19 (3%)	com fac gal	4 (2%)
art	136 (6%)	art com	11 (2%)	emj ga soc	3 (1%)
com	113 (5%)	fe pm	11 (2%)	fe pm com	3 (1%)
emj	112 (5%)	art cg	10 (1%)	pm fe cg	3 (1%)
pap	76 (3%)	emj pla	9 (1%)	emj pla sa	2 (1%)
fe	68 (3%)	ei emj	9 (1%)	art blu com	2 (1%)
peo	64 (3%)	emj ga	9 (1%)	art blu pc	2 (1%)
cg	63 (3%)	art emj	9 (1%)	art ca emj	2 (1%)
sch	61 (3%)	pap pla	9 (1%)	art coar com	2 (1%)
ei	49 (2%)	art cac	8 (1%)	art emj enj	2 (1%)

Figure 7: One, Two, and Three Code Frequency

Themes

Six sections illustrate each theme that unfolded during the research. In each section, there is significant representation from each participant's roles to support the themes and the assets outlined. Themes speak to key assets and primary mindsets of participants from the fourteen interviews, but also from larger community trends. Participants spoke in direct and indirect ways, outlining assets and mindsets of the community, themselves, or various groups in often-great detail. Direct quotes are in quotes while indirect ideas are summarized in each theme. To protect anonymity, all pseudonyms have been maintained and any identifying information has been removed. Given the amount of identifying information in the transcripts, they were not included in the appendix. While some respondents spoke in stories, others responded to my questions with short answers. Each theme begins with a student voice and moves into responses from the rest of the participants according to their contributions. The themes are complex, but support the deepened understanding of the arts community in HWH necessary to the final design of "Social Artistz."

Theme 1: Opportunity Mindsets

The first part of the mindset emerging around opportunity is a student-centered perspective. The section frames opportunity as access, exposure, and availability of arts programs. All the four students expressed interest in developing their education in the arts but not having the right options or opportunities to do so. Some have had opportunities for arts instruction in school settings, like sisters Marie and Katie who attended a private

school that valued the arts in school while they were there. Actively wanting more opportunities for young artists, Marie stated: “I love art, and I can’t really, I don’t even have an art teacher right now.” While Marie has an extreme interest in the arts, just like Alex and Jackson, she chose to leave that art class as she does not believe the teacher has enough teaching experience to assist her in her work. Also, the art class is the only one offered and she had already taken it with another teacher the previous year. Given Alex and Jackson’s mentioned attendance at public school, their accessibility to advanced art instruction has always been limited to real-world arts contexts. Alex even admitted that he had never met an artist before, pulling into the discussion the reality that accessibility for youth in HWH to arts instruction is often been completely absent. When speaking about how a lot of people want to leave his beautiful town, Alex expressed: “I want art to show them that this town can be for everybody who loves art…” He is a young student artist that wants to increase access to art for everyone. He hints at the idea more people would stay in the community if there were more exposure to the arts in general.

Charlie was a former student of mine (she took art every semester for two years) living now in a town outside of HWH. When I inquired about her experience with her current interest in the arts, she indicated that she really didn’t like art before she came to my class. “I just couldn’t picture myself drawing and painting, and none of it.” When I asked her what changed her mind, she replied: “Actually being in an art class surrounded by other people that like to do it. It motivated me to want to do it.” When considering opportunity as a theme, Charlie’s experience illustrates the relationship between accessibility to opportunities and the desire for the arts. Charlie is a local that moved

slightly outside of her town, owning a place as a community member and former student engaged in lifelong creative practice. She also credits exposure and access to the right environment in order to develop a lifelong interest in the arts. There is a relationship between opportunity and interest that plays out in the educational trajectory of creative minded students, intentional or not.

As an educator in the school that some of the students attend, Bryan speaks to Charlie's experience with opportunity and interest from an educator's perspective. Getting students engaged in the arts has been a challenge for all the art educators I interviewed. Speaking of his own experience in a high school out-of-state, one particular teacher, Bryan, mentions his experience with cuts in arts budgets: "For the most part it seems to me that the interest in the arts is small and that might be a byproduct of them cutting so much of it out." Bryan remembers many more art courses in his school and now he meets students that have not taken any art classes. He asks: "How can you create an interest in something that you don't even provide for?" While Marie, a former student of Bryan's, expressed dis-interest in his teaching style, Bryan presents a perspective that he should not be the only art teacher or support network in the school or community. If students don't have clear interests, how can an educator create the space necessary to expose students to new areas of possible interest?

Bryan is not the only teacher that references art budget cuts as responsible for decreased interest in the arts. Benjamin also spoke of cut opportunities, namely his class offerings that shrunk from an ongoing loss of interest in the arts from the student population in recent decades. Yet, Benjamin also presented a very limiting belief that his

students would prefer to misbehave or disappear into technology than be creative. Struggling with behavior problems at the end of his long teaching career, Benjamin mentions little more about the art cuts or the lack of priorities for the school in an arts education. Mostly, he is concerned with the behavior and engagement in his students. He states:

> Each child brings something different to the mix. The thing that I do, it's not very, I hate to say it's not very structured even though it is. It seems like it's not. But it allows the kids to be creative because you'll understand this is racial but it's not racial at the same time. It's knowing my audience. I teach all but one of my students this year are Black. Over time, the Black kids that I teach they're rebellious and you have to talk to them a certain way. I assume you go to do that with white kids but it's been years since I've taught one.

In another section of the interview, Benjamin states that in his art classroom, "even the thuggish ones learn to love you." Other participants mentioned crime and youth, but Benjamin was the only white adult to link illegal activity and skin color using a racial slur. I imagine many of my former students like Charlie attending Benjamin's class, wondering whether or not they were safe to explore new ideas given their skin color.

Benjamin's mindset around his students' interests and access to creative pursuits fits within larger trends in the community's climate for youth. Often opportunities are rooted in ideas that youth are dangerous, or just lost in finding the right morals as Black youth. As a community leader and manager of an after school club that provides transportation for youth club members, Carl provides a counter perspective to the realities behind framing instruction for the youth of the Delta today. He sees students during a critical part of their development and demands: "I'm able to reach kids at a critical stage of their lives. Because kids have, I believe, an identity crisis." He goes on, with

conviction: “They want to be cool and popular but they want to do some good things as well. But now being popular and well-known is associated with a lot of bad things.” Like Benjamin, Carl speculates about the motivations of today’s youth. However, Carl’s mindset around opportunity for those youth also links to a larger critique: definitions and protocols of “manners” and “southern hospitality” as universal. Viewpoints of any kind of topic, let alone success, cannot possibly be shared by all. Still, Carl asks for a deeper look into the struggles for identity demonstrated by creative Black youth growing up in HWH:

> …think about the history of the area and how people had to overcome so many obstacles to get simple things like going to the bathroom and drink water and being in the same facility as others. And then, think about how people don’t vote and how they rob each other and try to kill one another. I mean, it’s crazy that things that have happened in the past, I would say, 50 years going back. That’s happening now. I know people say crime and those things are everywhere but you would think, in the South, where people’s thinking was not progressive that it would be different. It’s different alright. It’s just not in positive ways… people move from the South up to the North to get better jobs, to get better treatment of one another. Human rights, those things. That’s pretty sad. Kids growing up still feel that. That’s still a reality… if they’re interested in the arts, they’re still being challenged with some of those mindsets in leadership.

Carl relates to his mentees as a local Black mentor in very personal and direct ways. Whereas many in the community focus hypothetical threats associated with young Black “thugs,” Carl carries a powerful message to youth about the access and interest in the arts as fundamental human rights worth demanding. He says: “If they’re [students and youth] interested, where are the opportunities and if there are some opportunities what limitations or hurdles am I going to have to jump or hoops I got to jump through to achieve my goal.” Carl mentions that even with his own daughter, she did not know she was so interested in becoming a children’s book illustrator until she received an award

and she revealed her passion for art to him. If students do have an interest in the arts, what access do they have to examine their interests within their own communities?

Carl is also a musician and sees deep connections between HWH's access to historical Blues music including Blues in Schools, a program aimed at increasing interested in local arts history. Ray, the museum's curator, is in a position to comment on access to educational programming or resources for students and groups interested in his institution's content. Ray points out the heavy influence of Blues music in HWH's history and the museum's role in Blues in Schools. In general, the museum curates a permanent exhibition dedicated to the specific Blues artists and their respective histories in the region. Referencing a time when I brought my class to his museum several years ago, Ray expressed surprise that the students wrote him thank you letters for letting them visit. He wanted them to know that it was always there for them to visit, they could always feel welcome. Yet, Ray has struggled getting schools interested in accessing his cultural resources. In his first weeks of the job, Ray asked his boss the question of why schools were not visiting the museum very often. His boss responded about how the schools really had no interest in the museum. Ray reflected:

> There's a disconnect between school and museum and in the future, whoever were to come after me at this position, I hope that it would be easier for them. That they would be able to find a way to get school children, you into the museum, engage them in some way that it be a mutual, reciprocal, an arrangement.

Ray remains positive despite the disconnect he describes. He actively wants to find a way to collaborate with the schools visiting his museum. "You see I was brought up where I could go to the museum anytime I wanted to and not that my parents pushed me into a

museum but I had the kind of inquisitive mind where I wanted to see what was inside there. 'What's in there?' You know?" Ray continued: "The kids were writing things in the thank you cards along the lines of, 'Thank you so much for allowing me to come into the museum.' I'm thinking, 'Why would they think in their little minds that they could not come into the museum?'" Ray's main mindset around the purposes of art education is rooted in providing an invaluable opportunity for partnership between his museum and local schools. The museum remains free and accessible to all residents, both outsiders and locals. He expressed sadness that more of the community didn't use the public space.

As an outsider, Ray was surprised to find the low interest in the museum when he arrived. "Because I come from museums in Little Rock, Arkansas… in Memphis, Tennessee, where any given day when you drive up to that museum building, you're going to see yellow buses out in the front." Ray indirectly jokes how local visitors may not be interested in the museum in the first place, asking "why would I go to a museum and what would be inside of it? What reason would I go inside that building other than possibly to be put down that I'm not an educated person or that I'm not the correct race?" Comments about how different the sides of HWH are precede his joke. He described a community comprised of the "elite… descendants of people who own the cotton plantations" and then there are the people of "Helena, world or economy or whatever… concerned about a place to live…" As an outsider to the community and also a white male, Ray's perceptions reveal a mindset about how history has affected the history of access to the arts. His viewpoint brings into question the role of public art institutions being able to curate community-wide interest in the arts. The theme of opportunity in the

perspectives and mindsets of the study's interview participants included conversations about race, class, regional history, and more. Many more themes are here to explore, all leading to the program design of "Social Artistz."

Theme 2: Changing Perspectives Mindsets

In addition to the mindsets around opportunity, patterns in the coding process revealed changing perspectives as the next predominate theme. Shifting perspectives in the interviews reveal themselves in many different ways, from students realizing their own interest or potential to entire sections of the community addressing the need to increase access to the arts. Like in the example of Charlie, her classroom experience in art gave her a new perspective, a change in her beliefs about her own possibilities and identity as an artist. Giving a student a chance to explain his or her voice is a powerful goal of art education, a true change in some of the damaging beliefs about self that are so often perpetuated by the media. These damaging beliefs are also present in some school settings students encounter every day. How powerful the mindset of shifting perspectives could be for more students hoping to create a new reality.

Equally as powerful as a students' lifelong mindset that perspectives can change is the dialogue that emerged from all participants about art's power to create new perspectives in general. Inside the art class, Alex admits how "a lot of people was hoping to get out of this town, but a lot of people don't see the real beauty of it." Alex uses art as a way to see beauty in everything around her. When presented with questions about his art class, Jackson describes his peers' artwork (including Alex). "… I know we probably

have different thoughts about how we go into our artwork or how we do things. But their artwork is good though too." Refusing to hold any permanent perspective about "how to do art," Jackson continues: "I learn that as I got older, to observe more and not judge. Because you have to understand before you can judge someone or something they do. Cuz like someone said they hate it because they don't understand." Given Jackson's mindset towards a career in the arts, the practice of observing and getting to know all his classmates' artwork is a large part of his artistic approach. He wants a community that observes and asks artists questions.

Marie and Katie also express mindsets that connect art education in HWH to the theme of changing perspectives. Speaking of a local artist that made a deep impact on her, Katie expresses how this artist made her think differently about art. Katie is not particularly interested in the arts beyond high school, but this experience interacting with an artist in the community helped Katie to her see her own interests in art in different ways. She explains: "She just let us do really different art projects. I really liked it and I saw art in a different way." She also brings up one of her art teachers in school for giving her different perspectives than what she thought art was. Later in the interview, Katie states that the purpose of art education is to "see art as something new because there aren't many artists that come to Helena or are in Helena. Some people in Helena haven't even actually been many places around the country and they haven't seen different arts. Maybe to see a new perspective on art in their life." Both inside the traditional art classroom and in community spaces, the role of art and artists contributes to a large shift in student's viewpoints.

Paul is also a community member deeply worried about the role of perspectives in the town in regards to how those perspectives can or cannot change. Acknowledging positive changes in opportunities for youth, he also explains, "If you go on Facebook, if you just talk to people, they espouse this view of Helena that it is this not great place to live. There's no pride. There's no pride, not enough pride in our community…" Even students reference the low pride in community, but Paul's mindset centers on HWH as a place capable of change. Paul continues:

> … this is me coming from the point of view that Helena has given all these things to me, has done all these things for me, that I think that this is a terrific place. This is a place where I am proud to live, and to own a home in. Unless there's a collective shift towards, then the population decline, the economic decline, may be too hard to combat.

As an outsider in the community, Paul reserves great energy for efforts convincing outsiders and insiders of the value of life in the Delta.

Having grown up in the town and working now as an educator and artist, Bryan speaks of a sense of collective promise of community change from an arts-based perspective. Art is "just an opportunity for you to pick up a pencil and draw." He continues expressing about opportunities for creating change as an artist: "…it's a viable option for a person making it in his life and for creating things beautiful for things to see. Maybe it would change the minds of the people of that community…" While he expresses doubt about whether artists in HWH and the surrounding area currently access that power of change, he sees artists as makers of change in a community. More interesting is Bryan's direct mindset that art functions as a way for this particular community to discuss cultural differences. If people feel judged, art lets people be

themselves and invites appreciation for individual experience. Connecting to his student Jackson, Bryan states: “With our youth in the world that we live in where there's still prejudice… maybe you get to a level in yourself where you can appreciate people’s differences, where you can understand people for who they are and not judge.” In a community wrought with a complicated history of opportunity, art’s ability to keep minds’ open is vital.

All of the community leaders express how important the arts are to helping students gain critical thinking skills about their own perspectives and also viewpoints of the community. Kimmie possesses a large belief in the power of Delta youth she works with in her job and personal life. “There's a lot of people here who are so gifted, and just need to be told that the world's perception of Helena, there's so much more to it than that.” While the students themselves grapple with the perspectives of their own town, Kimmie brings up art’s role in her own present day life. Until recently, she felt like she “couldn't relate to art, couldn't create art, couldn't understand art. Here, as much as anywhere, I feel like I've become a little more open to the possibility that that's not true.” Speaking of Beth and Parker’s recent efforts, Kimmie felt inspired by the new conversations and creative energy surrounding her. She explains:

> It's a neat thing to learn from people as they’re creating and learn what that means for them. I have a deeper appreciation of what the importance of creativity is in individual lives, and if we expand that out to the community level, if everybody has the opportunity to think creatively, it also changes the way that you think critically.

Kimmie sees the power of art for community spaces. For her, there is a clear ownership of a mindset that increasing participation in the arts brings opportunities for community

members to engage in collective change. The theme of changing perspectives is a very prevalent mindset in the interviews, and provides a radical element to this study. According to participants young and old, the engagement of the community in the power of art to inspire new futures is an important theme for HWH, independent of this study's program design.

Theme 3: Creative Careers Mindsets

Last but not least, the mindsets present around creative careers asks for youth to consider becoming professional artists. Considering the former themes, one can assume the students carry many mindsets about opportunity for work in the arts. Access to arts programming provides students the opportunity to develop interests in creative careers, but what are their thoughts and feelings as they exit high school? What are the mindsets of living artists about being a working artist in HWH that stand as examples to young artists? Other questions arise with a closer look in the section below.

The viewpoints of students around careers in the arts are marked by individual desires to pursue passions, not just jobs. Not surprising, sometimes the students' ideas about careers appeared next to statements about leaving town. Jackson expressed his need to depart the community: "I felt like I should, you know, take my art somewhere else and take ideas from other places I've never seen before." Jackson also remarked about how he would love to eventually support other artists in the South. Building his own empire to give other artists opportunities, Jackson is looking at artists that "make music… or draw… or other people that have clothing lines and stuff like that… I really appreciate

up-and-coming people that make clothing… they are young and… they aren't out there yet." Compared to Jackson's well-developed desire, Marie mentioned how the presence of one of her teacher's curriculum projects impacted her new desire to have a career in the arts. Other students spoke of their teachers exposing them to careers in fun subjects, not connected to math or science.

Carl is one community leader and artist speaking directly to the connection of student potential in creative business. Arts instruction is just as important as any other instruction for students. "You cannot miss it, how big music and the whole arts industry is. You cannot miss that." Speaking to how difficult the transition is to adulthood, Kimmie brings up how powerful a paid artist-in-residence could be for local artists. She is excited about supporting young artists making the scary transition from school to career, stating:

> I think that's really cool. It's such a scary thing to graduate and have to go work. It's so weird. To suddenly be in a space where you're paying bills and that sort of stuff. I don't know. If there were space where you could explore a little bit more your creativity, explore what you want your work to look like and mean and do, and in the context of a place that's super meaningful, there's inspiration everywhere. Imagine if you're looking to create something, I don't know.

Kimmie and Carl come with different interests in art and music, yet both bring a mindset that being an artist is a valid career. Furthermore, they believe being an artist is just as meaningful and important as any job that pays the bills. Art can be a career for anyone, a viewpoint widely shared with the study's participants.

Artists living in HWH and growing up in HWH talk a lot about the realities of being in the profession full time. Some of the artists do other jobs, but a lot of them

expressed deep desire to "just be an artist," as Bryan stated. "I've always dreamed of it, if I could just be like an eight-hours-a-day-artist and just do that." He could "master some of these things" that are on his mind, and one day "be able to just draw, just paint." Bryan does sell his art, but his marketing is limited. And just like Evelyn, he also picks up teaching to support himself and his family. Evelyn also bought many other more indirect connections to creative careers in her efforts to sell her work. She is active in arts markets both locally and in Memphis, and she openly advocates for youth programming around her own personal goals of making the artist life sustainable through local commerce. As an artist actively making commercial art, she remarks how having creative careers supported in the community would be crucial to protecting "your time and money trying to produce stuff." Her ideas about youth programming in the community mirror her personal efforts to grow profitable outlets for her products. In her words, she jokes: "Starving artists are always going to be starving artists. Until you die."

Beth and Parker join Sam in illuminating the mindsets of those already forming careers in the arts. Having already chosen a career in the arts and recruited out of art school, Beth and Sam worked for Thrive as full-time, paid graphic designers. Sam's artistic identity shows through her design work at Thrive, whereas, Beth and Parker are using their personal time in HWH as a way to explore a printmaking business. Beth looks at her work with Parker as an experiment into fine art, while Parker looks as the business as an experiment into careers in the field of design. Even as artists and designers that move to HWH, their mindsets about artistic practice include an exploration of several career paths within the arts. While it is impossible to glean all the possible mindsets from

the interviews, the mindsets around creative careers joins the six themes so important to the study's findings. Students wanting to gain exposure to an arts practice before any professional venture would need support in navigating creative careers prior to graduation. "Social Artistz" takes into account this theme, in addition to the previous two themes. Sections below explain the assets found in the interviews, starting with Theme 4: People and Relationships Assets.

Theme 4: People and Relationships Assets

The first asset, and perhaps the most prominent in all the interviews, is the identification of people and relationships as key assets in the community. This theme shows up in many different ways, including how the community views outsiders entering the local, creative climate to the previously mentioned role of mentorship between adults and kids. The students themselves are assets as are all the participants, as the emphasis placed on the study's data collection relied directly on conversation that took place between myself and each participant. All fifteen participants value the relationships they have made while living in HWH. Some grew up appreciating the deep quality of relationships and others decided to stay in HWH because of the emphasis of relationships in the community.

With the majority of students growing up in HWH, the value of maintaining and developing deep relationships carries over into their views about how their own art impacts other people. Alex states: "…whatever I do in this town, it can affect everybody else. When it can affect everybody else it can make a positive impact for all the

people…" Katie also chimes in about the incredible focus that HWH puts on relationships:

> Community to me means just people getting along and friends and family, along with just a view of the landscape and community and what impact other people view on different arts. Or maybe they contribute to the community a lot and just different friends and family. Their bond together and what makes them friends and their bond together, a community. Maybe their relationship between everyone in the town or city. That's what community means to me. Or based on relationships between the people.

Designing a program and establishing any framework must take into account how important people and relationships are to these students. The importance is in the mindset but also in the actual relationships and people acting as assets in students' lives. Mentors and art educators make significant impacts on all the students. Students expressed how mentors really seemed to promote spaces where relationships thrived.

The art educators in the interviews indicate a heavy involvement in the community. Benjamin states how he is trying to bring church communities together: "There's not so many people now. Things are dying off and disappearing because we need to come together." Speaking more specifically of efforts within a church community, he continues "I can come up with ideas but the problem is you got… other people with you. I haven't been able to get the other people with me." At the same time that Benjamin presents a mindset regarding his students and their interest in art, he also states an example of trying to use his church community to bring people together. Bryan mentioned that his attempts were unsuccessful, but how many of his students know him from other parts of the community?

Conversing as an artist, Bryan speaks to the power of collective artists having natural relationships together: “You could have just met an artists and you can talk to them like you’ve known them for the last 16 years and you’ve been the best of friends.” He has kept in contact with all the artists in the community, and as an educator and artists he believes that “there’s nothing so vastly different about them and how they interact from any other artist groups.” Extending the asset in a specific artist role, the power of people becomes a deeply collaborative environment. Still he says: “There’s less opportunity for the children because there’s just less people that are willing or have the time to do it.” At the same time that artists are good at relationships with other artists, the community needs more people to serve as the main assets in leading and developing programming for youth.

From the perspective of outside people coming into the community, the powerful role of people and other relationships convinced them to stay. Like Paul, I moved to HWH and immediately was struck with the focus on relationships. As a teacher, relationships with my students ultimately inspired this study. Having stayed in the town since we both moved there in 2010, Paul sees his position of staying longer as an important asset. He wants to give back to others and his associates in HWH. Speaking of time spent in the community, he stated:

> …it grows on you, and then that's certainly what happened with Helena. I don't know. I think over time, I learned about myself that I would much prefer to live in a community where I do know people, and I do run into people at Walmart or on the street, and able to have those friendly conversations with a stranger, or a person that you just met. I'd rather have that than the anonymity that can come with a larger urban area.

Paul's feelings about the community relate directly to this theme and the larger asset HWH boasts in people and relationships. The community's power to build relationships finds many more outsiders like Paul.

Kimmie comments on Teach For America (TFA) recruits like myself and Paul, hoping that artists who work together and recruit new artists bring a different perspective to working with youth. Unlike the "average high-achieving TFA," building reciprocal relationships and listening to the community are deeply important goals. The asset of people power must also take into account the various ways that people in power actually separate community members. For Kimmie, her work with youth and community development "is related to how people of privilege engage with people in poverty." She already thinks "of how to do that in a healthy way and in a way that's not paternalistic or giving handouts or anything like that, but actually empowering the local community." When discussing relationships, Kimmie sees deep potential for HWH's youth. She believes they bring a level of unmatched resiliency. Kimmie's constant communication with youth excites her belief in their talents. They are the community's largest asset, according to her experience.

As new artists to the area, Beth and Parker try to approach the community in healthy ways, like Kimmie. Beth and Parker were struck with how much people wanted to talk, the constant word of mouth and socializing at music and art events (brought up by Carl as well). Parker recalls a trip back to the institution where she was getting her MFA: "Recently, I went back to Chicago… I'm way less stressed about walking into someone and just being like, 'Hey. Who are you? Tell me your story'." The constant chatting was

beneficial for her as she gained confidence with strangers. From outsiders to local youth, the focus on relationships reveals a wide-spread theme in the interviews. As a major asset, the people and relationships of HWH provide an important base to any program design seeking to engage youth.

Theme 5: Public Arts Assets

In addition to talking about people and relationships, many of the participants spent time talking about public arts. Public events like Thrive's Cherry Street Fair added a great deal to conversation, as does the annual Blues Festival. Many of the participants saw the presence of public arts spaces as beneficial but also commented on the idea of public spaces in general as opportunities for the presence and growth of arts education. For the participants, art education is a very public event, almost like a participation in HWH's history of creativity. Few students mentioned public arts as a predominant asset, only using a historical lens as presented in the theme that follows. However, the desire to do public arts in the community is common with the artists, new and old.

As a new artist learning about her wants and needs in her own careers, Parker remarks about how she was enjoying getting to know some of the youth in the area through her work in design projects in the public sphere. She mentioned she had interacted with the neighborhood boys at Thrive's community event and wanted to invite them to participate in a collaborative project. When Thrive's series of community events ended, she remembers: "I was hopeful that I'd keep these connections to what's going on and then it just ... no. When it gets cold, everyone stays inside. You don't see anyone."

Public events like Thrive's annual series of street festivals pushes the community into building more relationships and developing their art practice with youth. The lack of opportunity also becomes a loss, when sections of the community cease to interact with one another once the festival series ends. According to Beth, "if you're coming to Helena to be a student artist, I think you really need to figure out how your art is going to be accessible to the community and what are you going to do to make that happen." As an artist collective, Beth and Parker wanted their public art and design to be relevant to the local community at all costs.

Kimmie, the community leader agrees with the community's asset of public art for different motivations than her artist friends. Speaking of the increased time and space set aside for art in HWH, Kimmie clarifies that "that's very rare in a lot of places. It makes me think a lot about word of mouth in general, how word of mouth interacts with space and time." Kimmie sees public arts spaces and learning communities as ways to capitalize on HWH's specific style and the communication and transportation challenges community members face. Public events like the festival are influential, and she advocates for this asset for a number of reasons. She explains:

> We don't have any sort of strong communication infrastructure. There's a few radio stations, but any time you're talking about radio being a primary source of news, it's platform-specific, right? You're not going to listen to a certain radio station just to get the news, if you don't like the music as well or whatever. The paper is struggling. There's a couple of weird cable shows that I don't know anybody who actually watches those. Communication is a huge community issue here. How do you make decisions, how are you an informed citizen if there's not even any way to get word to you?

Public art spaces or learning centers where youth congregate are a deep and beneficial asset for a community. Kimmie's work often takes her into similar community spaces like the street festival. Like Kimmie, Beth and Parker try to spend time in those spaces in order to stay connected with the experience of the 'public' and those trying to influence what can be public or not public.

The museum represents a public space for Ray, a viewpoint he upholds in previous themes. Ray spends time talking about his museum as an asset, as do many of the participants. Grappling with the emergence of virtual learning spaces in some of today's educational circles, Ray hopes "museums are still going to exist and still be institutions where those things are kept for future generations…" He sees his exhibitions as largely responsible for the best access to an education in the history of blues music for the region. Most of the students interviewed had spent time inside the museum, but Ray was also interested in creating public events through his exhibitions. With the question in his mind about how to get more people engaged in public exhibitions from surrounding communities of HWH, he brainstorms: "... it doesn't necessarily have to be an exhibit. It could be an out-door function where it's nothing more than games and fun." Speaking more as an artist, Ray brings up a more specific asset: "With some of these empty buildings around town, that they be turned into a place where artists could have studios and work." From the idea of a space becoming more public, to the reality that there are abandoned public spaces with potential, Ray advocates for more public interaction. Public art is a major asset and theme in the study, followed only by Theme 6: Historical Assets.

Theme 6: Historical Assets

Last and perhaps the most interesting of the assets groupings, this section's exploration includes mentions and evidence of the Delta's historical identity, one rich in the arts. Students stay aware of historical trends, and this final mention of historical assets in the study is a major part of key findings, used in last chapter's program design.

While the students do not comment on their experience learning about the history in a classroom setting, they most often mention the historical presence of the Blues or current Blues festivals. They feel the history is a part of today's reality. When commenting about a friend that left town, Katie expressed disgust at her negative words about the community: "I feel like they (her friend) don't pay attention to the historic side. To the things that matter. Such as Blues Fest. I go there every year, and I've been going there since I was a baby." All the students interviewed expressed levels of awareness of the history of the area and its value to everyday people. Life in HWH has a lot of things "that remind you of who you are…" said Jackson. When I asked him directly his feelings about the South he replied: "I think we stand out more, especially like music wise, we paved the way for artists. And people in music, and people in art." Alex agrees, stating that artists in the Delta are unique because they make powerful art, only adding to Jackson's pride in being Southern.

Carl actively pushed the powerful art dynamic of HWH in our interview, connecting the history of the place to his own identity as an artists, not just as a community leader. He enjoys playing his music in the Delta because, "…it just brings a lot of people together from a lot of different walks of life… I believe conversations

wouldn't be had with people if it weren't for music." When Carl talks about the arts in the community, he brings up "how we can't do enough in the arts program because this community, and surrounding communities that make up the Delta are so, I would say, heritage is so rich in the arts." He mentioned not just the Blues alone, but Gospel and Jazz too. He even mentioned Elvis Presley having a history in the town. Relating the history to this students, Carl says:

> We tell a lot of Black kids, in general, you know you can be a mechanic, you can be, you can always use your hands, you can be a welder, you can be an electrician, which is all those professions are needed as well. But that may not catch the interest of kids. They love music. They love dancing.

Based on this interest, Carl sees the impact of music programs in schools. The town's past holds great significance in garnering interest for youth.

After moving here, Paul quickly recognized the power of this asset. "...now I see, and I appreciate. There are a lot of people that really care and are enthusiastic about this form of art, this form of expression, that are really important to this area of the country." When people talk about improving quality of life in the Delta, Paul knows those efforts "will have to include the arts. Just historically, that's the time of greatest success for this community was also a time where the arts were thriving." Kimmie mentions what Paul won't say in the interview with me. The Blues history is also a history of pain. Kimmie explained:

> I feel like it's so crucial to living in a place like Helena, to hold both this place has been a source of pain for people, and this has been a difficult place to live, and it still is a difficult place to live, and there's a lot of beauty here. There's a lot of hope here. If you go to either one of those and just sit on one of those, you're either being really naïve, or you'll get depressed. It's both. Helena can both be a place where people come in and are a part of a renaissance and a part of growing

> this community, and a place where that renaissance is owned by this community, and not taken over by a whole bunch of people from the outside.

Kimmie's words hit me directly, as an outsider working in the region. From the Blues to making art from everyday situations, the power of the arts and the assets HWH's history brings a massive impact for youth. If a student wishes to stay engaged with this community's history, then where do they start? Putting people in places of leadership for youth that are from the community is a large part of this asset, a passing on of history within the community's terms. Where are the mentors in the community most poised to guide youth in exploring their identity?

Charlie spoke of the dual nature of the role of people and collaboration, both in a historical sense and also as an explanation of her present relationship with HWH. "I wouldn't talk bad about where I come from, although it's a bad place, but in some ways it's a good place." When I asked for more detail, she explained: "In way it's good because some people can come together and change things about the community." As far as the bad part, the reality exists, "because some people can't come and try to talk about things to make the community a better place... for youth that's coming up, getting older." With youth growing up in HWH at a critical stage in life, Charlie sets limits on what the power of arts can be for youth wanting to engage in their community. In the study's final program guide or model entitled "Social Artistz," Charlie's honesty around the failures of community are not lost. All participants recognize that the history of the area is still alive and those histories serve as fundamental assets for any authentic engagement in arts education.

All key findings explored in the last chapter use six themes as organized in the above sections. The assets and mindsets of the study coalesce to help build a more authentic program design aimed at engaging youth in their community and illuminate many areas of the arts communities inside and outside of HWH's educational spaces. Using the words of the study's participants, these findings ultimately answer the central research question.

CONCLUSION

The six themes in this chapter illustrate a wide range of opinion from fifteen individuals actively participating in the arts community of Helena-West Helena. These six themes are:

1. Opportunity Mindsets
2. Changing Perspectives Mindsets
3. Creative Careers Mindsets
4. People and Relationships Assets
5. Public Arts Assets
6. Historical Assets

The fourteen total interviews contained much more information than just identifying these six themes. Thus, narrowing content into answering this study's central research question proved difficult. However, the six themes do answer the research questions in regards to identifying the major assets and themes prevalent in this particular case-study's sampling of participants. The final chapter moves into refining the themes into key findings, including the presentation of a program design entitled "Social Artistz."

Chapter Five: Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to relay the key findings of the case study conducted. As a reminder, the central research questions was:

What are the primary mindsets and key assets of local community leaders, art teachers, artists, museum directors, and teenage youth in Helena-West Helena Arkansas surrounding the purposes and applications of art education in the community? Based on those findings, how might the key mindsets and assets be used in the design of a collaborative art program that inspires teenage youth to engage and or strengthen commitment to the community of Helena-West Helena through participation and inspiration from the proposed program?

When considering the range of answers directed toward these questions, the depth of responses is notable. Key findings to the central research question rely heavily on the themes taken from the coding process. Based on those themes, I identified patterns taken from the interviews and field notes to form key findings that ultimately answer the research question. The key assets and primary mindsets directly contribute to a program design guide. This program design guide also contains best practices from the literature review to ground the findings in the larger context of the field of art education. Implications for the field of art education and also some suggestions for future research follow the key findings. Finally, my closing remarks.

KEY FINDINGS: SOCIAL ARTISTZ

Participants in the study responded to my questioning with their own ideas and words for the purposes and meanings of art education. Fulfilling the intents of this study, words of the interviewees revealed community-wide assets and mindsets capable of contributing to the design of a program entitled "Social Artistz." I present a summarized version of the themes into key findings through a table below, but this is only one portion of the findings. As a reminder, the second part of my research question is: how might the key mindsets and assets be used in the design of a collaborative art program that inspires teenage youth to engage and or strengthen commitment to the community of Helena-West Helena through participation and inspiration from the proposed program? Table 6: Collaborations and Spaces for Youth is a table with summarized content of the assets and mindsets identified through this study. The assets and mindsets are moved into a more focused table of results for easier reading, placing the findings in collaborations vs. spaces. While still acknowledging all the themes, many of the mindsets and assets cross over into both spaces and collaborations. After looking at the table below, one sees how the assets and mindsets found in the themes inform potential spaces and collaborations for programs for youth.

	Collaborations for Youth Engagement	Spaces for Youth Engagement
Primary Mindsets	Relationships are most important Youth are at critical point in life Art is a career for anybody Extra Interest in arts mentorship Development needs leadership Artist to artist communication Art is a way to heal Art as a way to express identity Art is a way to explore Community collaboration is difficult Opportunity builds interest	Art is a pubic event in HWH The South is unique Education in art is necessary for all More funding is needed for arts Change is welcome and urgent Art spaces are calm and healing Not enough spaces currently Leadership must create new spaces Teachers need more support School may not be enough
Key Assets	Participants themselves Other family and friends Local mentorship (esp. Black mentors) Career advice History of collaboration Honest and resilient youth Artist communities Religious groups School and museum partnerships	Historical landmarks and events History and blues education programs Summer programming and events Artist-in-residence studios Community centers and classes After school clubs Religious gatherings and spaces Free museum entrance

Table 3: Collaborations and Spaces for Youth

The ending of the title of "Social Artistz" is purposeful. The Z is an intentional switch for an S because I sought a new spelling as a way to symbolize a new way of being an educator in the region. While I play a small part in any implementation of key findings, the resulting guide represents an approach that puts student voices first. It also situates the community of participants first, as they are most poised to actually carry out action behind connecting "Social Artistz" to any real-world reality. Any future effort can use these guidelines as recognition of what the community is already saying and doing for youth and community investment. Figure 6: Social Artistz Design references a

framework style credited to Arlene Golbard's (2006) watch list in supporting the participation section. I directly credit Arlene Goldbard for inspiring community planning to rely on theory as well as community voices (see Chapter 2, pp. 26-27).

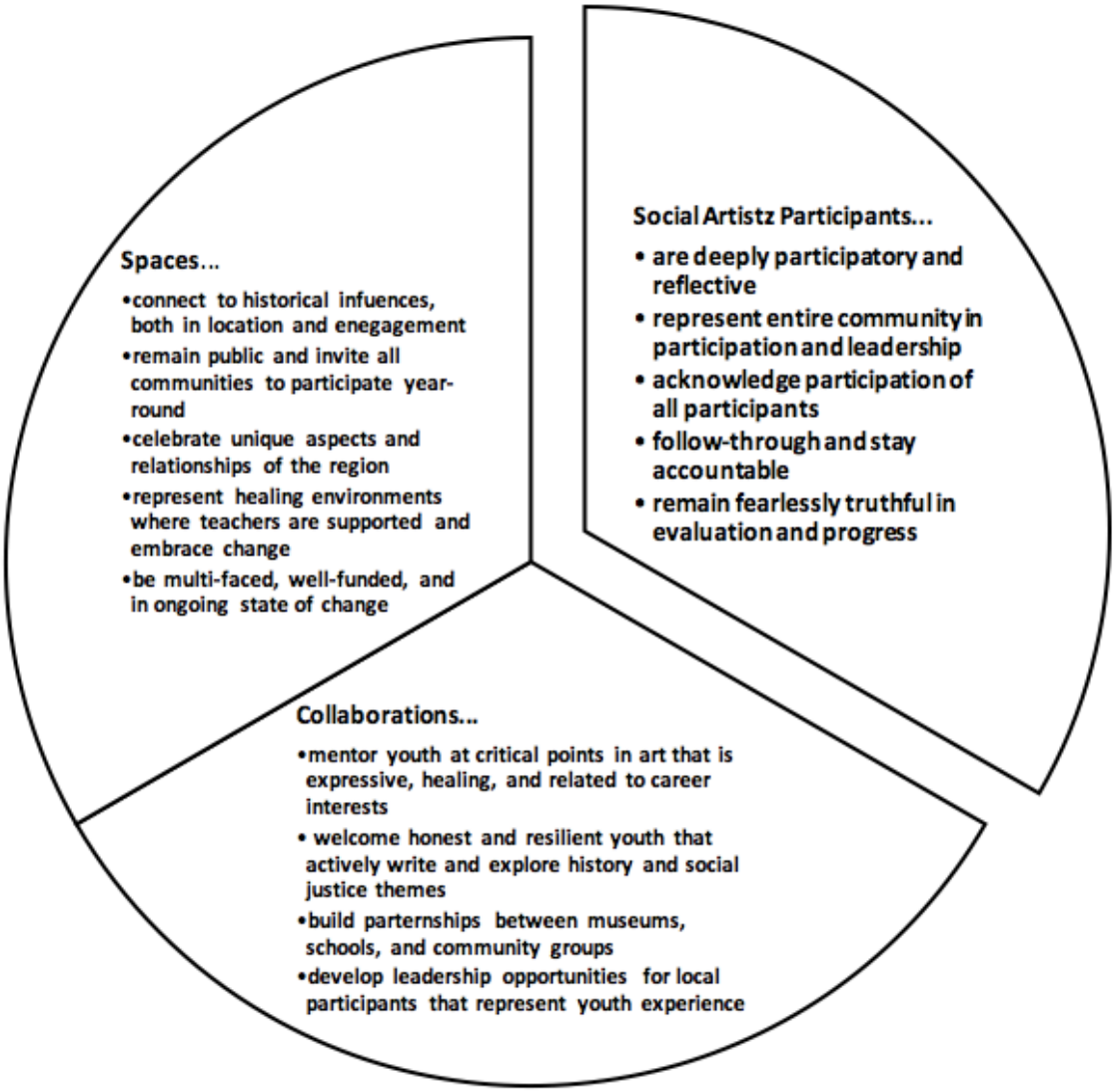

Figure 8: Social Artistz Design

Segmented into a circle of parts, each section specifies major findings drawn from the interviews I conducted. While some of the bullet points label assets, others label mindsets. Key findings around collaborations that cultivate youth investment focused on mentorship. Mentorship is best achieved when the direct lived experience of the mentee and mentor matches one another. Other highlights of the guidelines include the celebration of unique spaces. With a program that is available year-round through a variety of funding options, youth could very well be enticed to continue participation in the community by utilizing a program that follows this framework. The fundamental guidelines and this program design can be used for future community arts programming in the region.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD

The field of art education brings together many contributors. This is seen in the vast number of movements and trends of recent decades explored in Chapter Two. This case-study stands to add to the abundance of rich dialogues and perspectives centered around communities using arts-based methods to increase youth engagement. In the imagining of what each community needs and/or wants is a group of people asking what the community is already saying. This study also gives the reader an applied program design, taking research findings into a place where leadership could truly engage youth in community happenings. In the larger implications of the field, the projects in rural communities add a needed voice to the examples of where and when education interacts

positively with community development and youth development. In the areas of our nation losing resources and residents, the power of the arts takes center stage. More importantly, in the regions of our nation such as the Mississippi Delta that stand with such resilience and love for the arts, this study presents an important look at what exactly Delta youth want.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

An overwhelming amount of suggestions come to mind when considering the direction of research following this case study. On a personal level, I would welcome the chance to investigate participants' opinions about the findings. Turning the case study into a longitudinal look at the attitudes and perceptions of art education in the community would lend deeper insights. In 3, 5, or 10 years, would mindsets and ideas change or stay the same? I would also extend the scope of the geography to embrace areas of the Delta that include counties in Mississippi. Clarksdale, Mississippi is a close city across the bridge with an influence on HWH. Overall, I would welcome future research into the overall critique and comment on my chosen themes in this case study.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I returned to the Arkansas Delta where I spent my early days of teaching to investigate deeper where my student voices could take HWH's future. What an extraordinary experience to speak with those students again, to answer my question of how to build more engaging spaces with them. After establishing a research question and

explaining the necessary elements that begin the story in the first chapter, the remaining chapters explored the literature, the methodology, the finally, the results. The study fails to honor all the wishes and wants of the youth interviewed; however, the overall study does provide a data-driven guideline for any future programming for community arts in the region. At the center of the Delta's future are many assets and mindsets ready and willing to cultivate youth investment in the community.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: SITE CONSENT LETTER

thrive.

September 30, 2015

Dr. James Wilson, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
P.O. Box 7426
Austin, TX 78713
irbchair@austin.utexas.edu

Dear Dr. Wilson:

The purpose of this letter is to grant Ruth Linford, a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, permission to conduct research at Thrive. The project, "Social Artistz: Cultivating Youth Investment in the Arkansas Delta's Future through Arts-Based Collaborations and Spaces" entails investigating Thrive's archives. Thrive was selected because of their collection of video interviews with community leaders in Helena-West Helena and their published reports with ongoing economic development updates. Ruth has completed a graduate internship with Thrive in the past and is now returning as a researcher to investigate arts-based collaborations that Thrive and their community partners may or may not adopt in the future. Ruth will compare and contrast anonymous and confidential field notes taken from the archived interviews against other qualitative data gathered from additional interviews and observations outlined in the study. Notes from archives will be taken in a field journal with anonymous names and codes and immediately destroyed following the submission of the thesis. General observations and anonymous quotes may be used with no indication of identity of the subjects.

If results are to be shared with Thrive from the study, they will be delivered via mail after completion of the thesis. I, Terrance Clark, do hereby grant permission for Ruth Linford to conduct "Social Artistz: Cultivating Youth Investment in the Arkansas Delta's Future through Arts-Based Collaborations and Spaces" at Thrive.

Sincerely,

Terrance Clark
Thrive
Co-Founder

APPENDIX B: STUDY INTRODUCTION LETTER

Dear Interview Participant,

The purpose of this cover letter is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, your verbal confirmation will take the place of your signature. You have been asked to take part of this study about the mindsets and assets behind the future of art education in Helena-West Helena, Arkansas. The purpose of this study is to examine how and why the community may or may not use community art education models as ways to engage youth in

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer questions in an interview lasting no more than one hour. I will be interviewing no more than twelve study participants. other participants in addition to observing areas of art education such as art classrooms, artist studios, and any public arts events throughout the community.

Your participation will be audio recorded. All of the interviews will be audio recorded and made into coded digital files with pseudonyms in the recording and the transcription. No personal information will be used when recording, labeling, or storing the files. The recordings will be kept in a secure place, and the recordings will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and his or her associates. The recordings will be erased after they are transcribed and coded and the thesis has been submitted.

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study. You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the study may serve as a policy recommendation for future programming in art education.

Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway. If you would like to participate, you may verbally agree to the interview.

Your privacy and the confidentiality of your data will be maintained during the entirety of the study. All interview participants will be given a pseudonym and any personal records of real identities will be kept completely separate from data. Any field notes from the interviews and observations will include pseudonyms and codes to maintain confidentiality. The consent/authorization document is the only record linking the subject with the research. The audio recorded interviews and any recordings of the investigator's personal reflections will be transcribed, coded, and kept in password-protected files on a hard drive. Any field notes from the interviews or observations will also be transcribed,

coded, and kept in password-protected files on the same hard drive. The hard drive and any physical copies of data will be stored in a locked safe and will only be heard or viewed for research purposes by the investigator and his or her associates. Personal identity would be impossible to gain from the data collected given pseudonyms and codes used from beginning to end. In addition, any personal information (like the signed parent permission forms) will be kept separate from the recordings. All digital recordings, field notes, physical documents, and other data will be permanently deleted and/or shredded at the submission of the thesis no later than May 1st, 2016.

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you, or with your participation in any study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded using a pseudonym. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept for the duration of no more than six months and then erased.

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher **Ruth Linford** at **801 389 6099** or send an email to **aruthlinford@gmail.com** for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed.

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

If you agree to participate in the study, please indicate verbally. No signature will be required.

Thank you,

Ms. Ruth Linford

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